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Mid edition No 663

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Postgate & Firmin classic returns this month

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MP's death should make us change view of alcohol

WE ARE all very quick in this country to point to drugs and illegal highs as the real perils of our society; the epitome of modern day threats to our lives and health.

Yet, more often than not, we do so while thinking little of drinking or smoking - legal vices which have long since been acceptable pastimes and, certainly when it comes to alcohol, we celebrate and promote in equal measure.

While smoking has become an increasingly anti-social activity which only the most stubborn of addicts tolerate, drinking rarely gets such a bad press.

After all, we all enjoy a drink don't we? All enjoy to relax with a glass of wine or join friends for a pint. And getting merry is a good place to be if you can avoid tipping over the edge.

The death this week of Charles Kennedy, the charismatic



Editor **Chris Britcher**

former Liberal Democrat leader, was an extreme case of the perils of addiction, but once again highlighted that for those who fall over that edge for years rather than hours, it is a dark, lonely and dangerous place.

More, however, is that while we are quick to scoff at drug users tripping, or pour scorn on their withdrawals, we seem to accept and tolerate drunken behaviour - the violence, the car crashes, the vomiting. You have to admit, it's an odd state of mind for us to collectively have.

The answer, of course, is that as a society we need to have far less tolerance of drunken behaviour, to prevent it from spilling out on to our streets or sparking trouble at home. A little of the energy we devote to ensuring the stigmatisation of drugs and to a lesser extent smoking, and we may find ourselves in a better place.

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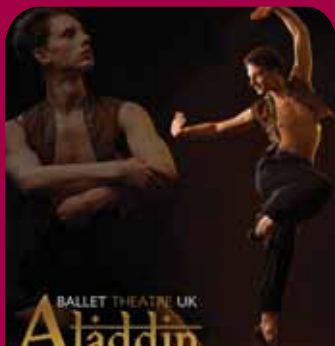
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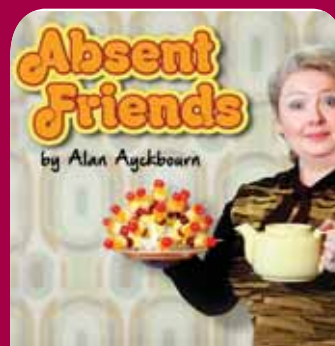
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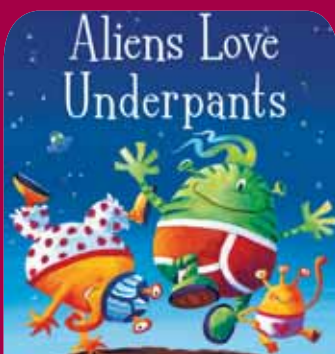
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Flight path row creates a racket on Downing Street

By Maria Chiorando

maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS from west Kent have joined forces to deliver a letter to Downing Street opposing the narrowing of flight paths going into Gatwick Airport.

They say the additional noise created by the changes brings considerable noise to areas previously unaffected.

Among those areas particularly affected are near popular tourist attractions Hever Castle and Penshurst Place.

The six-page letter is significant as it represents the first time campaign groups opposing expansion of airports in the south east - the City of London, Heathrow and Gatwick - have joined forces.

The main demand on the Department for Transport is to toughen up air traffic control which has ushered in the changes to the flight paths.

It comes just weeks before the Airports Commission, chaired by Sir Howard Davies, delivers its report and findings to the Government. It is compiling information on where best to increase airport



PROTEST: Campaigners say they are being "ignored... and persecuted" by flight path changes

capacity. According to campaign group CAGNE (Communities Against Noise and Emissions), which has members in Kent and from East and West Sussex, some of its members have been exposed to 'over 17 hours a day of unrelenting noise' which 'affects education, productivity and work'.

Brendon Sewill, chairman of Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, said: "We can not see how any airport expansion can go

forward with the anger that is being vented at all airport operators due to the current airspace changes. All the protest groups coming together should send a clear message to the Government that residents are fed up with being ignored and that they will not be disregarded."

An excerpt from the letter says: "We believe current airspace management and air traffic control arrangements are unacceptable

and undemocratic; in our view they amount to a serious failure of regulation and an abuse of government policy.

"Our communities are deeply frustrated by what has happened to them; they feel ignored, angry and persecuted. We have collectively lost confidence in the ability or willingness of the aviation sector - both regulators and businesses - to address the issues that impact us."

Survey to find out how life on Civvy Street is for ex-service personnel

AN APPEAL has gone out to track down around 129,000 ex-service personnel and discover how they are adapting to life off the frontline.

The Kent and Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board wants to identify them and find out how they have adapted to life on Civvy Street.

The board, which comprises representatives from local government in Kent and Medway, the Armed Forces and service charities, wants them to take part in a survey.

It will help understand the needs of ex-service personnel and their families.

The board was set up in 2011 to deliver the Armed Forces Community Covenant, which aims to encourage local communities to support the armed forces in their area.

KCC project manager Jayne Collier-Smith said: "In Kent we have over 2,600 serving personnel and 412 reservists who we know we can reach with this survey.

"But we are keen on tracking down

ex-service personnel who we have no way of knowing where they are and how their lives have changed.

"The survey will remain anonymous though we do ask for a postcode to help us map needs and opportunities.

"By taking part in this survey, it will help us shape where and how resources can be focused for people associated with the armed forces.

"We want to make sure the Kent and Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board have as much information as possible to inform their decision making."

There are three regular Army troop bases in Kent - Brompton Barracks, Invicta Park Barracks and Shorncliffe Army Camp - alongside six reservist bases.

The closing date for completion is July 31. The overall findings and results of the research will be published in early 2016. To take part visit www.kent.gov.uk/armedforces from June 5.

Free bus pass for secondary school children deal agreed

PARENTS with more than two 11 to 16-year-olds in secondary schools in Kent are set to benefit by being able to apply for an extra Young Person's Travel Pass free.

Kent County Council's cabinet agreed to the deal on Monday.

However, it will come as little relief to many parents, still having to pay out £250 for children to get to and from school. The passes were

introduced after the scrapping of the popular Freedom Pass which provided unlimited travel for school children for £100.

Applications for the next academic year for the pass can be submitted from Monday.

To guarantee passes in time for the first day of the academic year, applications must be received by July 18.

Finally... Ann Barnes scraps £15k youth commissioner job

POLICE and crime commissioner Ann Barnes confirmed this week the end of the youth commissioner post which has brought so much controversy during her time in office.

In front of the Kent and Medway Crime Panel on Tuesday, Mrs Barnes said the £15,000 role would be replaced by a youth advisory group.

Mrs Barnes said: "The demands placed on one young person, I

cannot justify anymore.

"Even though I do think a youth commissioner was a good concept and Kerry Boyd did a good piece of work."

Designed to act as a link between the police and the young, the role became mired in controversy after first appointee Paris Brown resigned after making unsavoury comments on Twitter.



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Intelligence Corps march through town centre

THE Intelligence Corps marks its 75th anniversary with a special parade through the streets of Ashford this weekend.

Members of the public are urged to line the streets of the town centre on Sunday, 36 years after the initial Freedom of the Borough was granted, on May 16, 1979.

The Intelligence Corps was based in the town's

Templer Barracks from 1966 to 1997.

The freedom affords them the right of marching through the borough on all ceremonial occasions with bayonets fixed, drums beating and bands playing. The right has since been exercised in 1983, 1990 and 2004.

Motorists are warned of minor traffic disruption along the route of the parade.

Second survey increases estimate of amount of oil beneath Weald Basin

By Jamie Weir

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FRACKING in Kent took a step closer to becoming reality after an independent report confirmed significant reserves of oil sitting under the Weald Basin, in the west of the county.

The report – written by oil services company Schlumberger – upgrades an earlier estimate for the Horse Hill site near Gatwick Airport. It is owned by a consortium of oil companies, one of which is Solo Oil.

Chairman of Solo, Neil Ritson, said: "We are pleased that Schlumberger, using their own proprietary techniques, has confirmed the earlier work conducted by Nutech.

"Taken together these independent estimates continue to suggest a significant oil potential in the unconventional Jurassic sequence in the Horse Hill area and may have wider significance in the Weald Basin generally."

The report places the total oil in



FRACKING: Oil below the Weald

the Jurassic part of the site at 271 million barrels of oil per square mile, while the other section has an estimate of 255 million barrels per square mile.

The previous estimate by Nutech

in April this year for the second section was 158 million barrels per square mile.

If the company were to drill for oil, it would likely use the controversial technique of hydraulic fracturing – pumping a mixture of water and chemicals into boreholes at high pressure – to extract it say opponents.

Julie Wassmer campaigns against fracking in Kent. She told KoS it could do significant damage to the Weald Basin.

She said: "Around 255 million barrels of this oil are within the unconventional target so alarm bells should be sounding as to how this could be retrieved other than by fracking. This, at a time of increasing evidence of the environmental damage fracking can cause, only yesterday the EPA reported that fracking has caused water pollution in America.

"Fracking will expose UK citizens and our environment to a toxic industry which cannot guarantee reserves, financial viability and, least of all, the level of jobs promised."



POPULAR: Card set for Dartford

Oyster opens up travel card opportunities

THE popular Oyster card for use on trains is to be rolled out in September.

The pre-paid card has revolutionised ticketing in the capital and there has been a call for the service to stretch into the north west of the county.

Buses in Dartford already accept the cards, now the town's station will accept them too.

The town's Conservative MP, Gareth Johnson, has welcomed the news.

He said: "I am pleased there is now confirmation from Southeastern that passengers will be able to use their Oyster cards to Dartford.

"I and others have sought the introduction of the Oyster card for Dartford as it has always been an anomaly that people in Dartford could use the Oyster card on some buses in the town but not on the train.

"This should provide a more seamless ticketing system for commuters into London and one which I know many commuters have been seeking for a long time.

"I will be making representations to the Department of Transport about the introduction of smart card ticketing in Dartford, which I hope will complement the Oyster system."

Other Kent towns are also keen to adopt the technology - with Sevenoaks keen to follow suit.

KCC Lib Dem chief in tribute to Kennedy

LEADER of the Liberal Democrats on Kent County Council has described the death this week of former party leader Charles Kennedy as "a complete shock".

Trudy Dean, who represents Malling on KCC, told KoS: "It is very sad news.

"Charles Kennedy was one of those very rare characters that was able to combine political life with a wonderful sense of humour and the ability to entertain, which meant he was well-liked and respected not only by members of his party, but by members from all political parties.

"He was widely respected as a politician who always told the story as it was, without spin."

Mr Kennedy died suddenly at his home in the Highlands on Monday. He was just 55.

He had long battled with alcohol and had lost his seat in the Ross, Skye and Lochaber constituency to the SNP in last month's general election.

It ended a 32-year career as an MP - during which he led the party from 1999 to 2006.

Promise of boost to county road network

A PARTNERSHIP agreement has been signed designed to improve the county's roads.

Kent County Council has penned a deal with Highways England - previously the Highways Agency - which it is hoped will improve planning and communication between the two organisations.

The agreement includes: protocols on agreeing and using diversion routes whenever a major road has to close; more flexible use of electronic road signs; setting out how the organisations will work together during major events; a 'joined up' approach to helping drivers prepare for driving during winter; and renewing commitments to support road users when Operation Stack is in place.

Simon Sheldon-Wilson, director of customer operations at Highways England, said: "This agreement, the first of its kind, will help both organisations by bringing together best practice and building on the positive, day-to-day relationship we already have with KCC. It will form a guide which anyone in either of our organisations can call upon."

Time running out to influence boundaries

THERE is still time to have an input on proposals to change electoral boundaries for Kent County Council.

The independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England is consulting local people on its draft proposals which would see the number of county councillors reduced by three to 81. These would compromise 65 single members and eight two-member divisions.

The consultation closes on July 6.

Max Callar, chair of the commission, said: "We are keen to hear what local people think of the recommendations and to tell us if they agree with the proposals. If you don't agree with the boundaries we have drawn, we would like to hear your alternatives.

"Our review aims to deliver electoral equality for voters in elections to Kent County Council. This means that each county councillor represents a similar number of electors so that everyone's vote in county council elections is worth roughly the same regardless of where you live."

For details, see www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk.

agenda

What will make next week's headlines...

Public rally to launch A&E proposal protest

A CAMPAIGN to fight proposals to close the accident and emergency department at Margate's QEOM Hospital will get under way with a public rally in Thanet on Thursday.

Organised by the Thanet's People Assembly Against Austerity, the rally takes place at 7pm at the King's Theatre in Ramsgate.

It follows planned talks to close the A&E at both Ashford and Margate hospitals and have one central unit based at the Kent & Canterbury Hospital.

An assembly spokesperson said: "Closing A&E will not only mean a huge loss of a vital facility – it will mean a downgrading of the



hospital which our community cannot afford."

Speakers at the rally will include Labour MP John McDonnell, and the Green Party's Stuart Jeffrey.

Walk highlights plight of refugees and detainees

AN 80-MILE walk from Dover to Crawley, via Canterbury, to raise awareness of the plight of refugees and detainees got under way this weekend.

Lasting nine days, Refugee Tales: A Walk in Solidarity with Refugees and Detainees is modelled on the Canterbury Tales. Among a number of high

profile figures taking part are poet John Hegley and actor Niamh Cusack.

At each stopping point - which includes Chilham, Charing, Wrotham, Rochester and Knockholt will be performances. It is co-organised by University of Kent professor David Herd.

...also

Unlocking its potential

WORK continues on improvement work to Tonbridge Town Lock this week.

A joint project between the local council and the Environment Agency, work began last Monday and will take some 34 weeks to complete.

Magna Carta parade

CANTERBURY commemorates the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta next Saturday.

Magna Carta Day will see exhibitions, music and parades through the city streets as part of a string of national events.

Register tax credits now

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is urging the 116,700 people who receive tax credits in Kent to renew their tax credits claim online as soon as possible ahead of the deadline next month.

The deadline for renewals is July 31.

Quiz police chiefs online

POLICE and crime commissioner Ann Barnes and Chief Constable Alan Pughley, will be answering questions in a live web chat on Tuesday, June 9, from 6pm for an hour.

Visit www.kent.police.uk/onlinemeeting.

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Could Hollywood be Clangers' next stop?

After 43 years, Peter Firmin and Oliver Postgate's creation returns for a brand new series and potential global take-off

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

THE Clangers return to our screens in a couple of weeks - and there is already talk the odd space creatures could spawn a big screen outing if its TV revival is well received.

The original TV hit was created by the legendary creative duo of Peter Firmin and Oliver Postgate - both who lived and worked in Blean, near Canterbury.

Broadcast by the BBC between 1969 and 1972, the series became a huge hit with children and adults.

Now a new series has been created - with Mr Firmin, who still lives in Blean, an executive producer and Whitstable's Daniel Postgate, son of the late Oliver, penning the scripts. Monty Python star Michael Palin will be the narrator.

Speaking to KoS, Daniel Postgate told us: "If it does go well, it may be nice to think about a movie."

It was 1969, the year Neil Armstrong stepped on the moon and Py-

thon launched, when Oliver Postgate, who died in 2008, did the original voice-over for the show which soon became a major hit.

A colony of mouse type creatures living on a blue planet not far from our own was the concept which captured the imagination. Much of it was created and filmed at a barn in Blean. Mr Firmin's wife, Joan, knitting the original 'skins' of the Clangers around the carefully constructed metal and wood skeleton created by the artist Mr Firmin.

The duo of Postgate and Firmin - via their Smallfilms company - were behind some of the most enduring children's television - creating the likes of Ivor the Engine, Pogles' Wood, Noggin the Nog and, of course, Bagpuss.

A proposal for the new show was touted several years ago and will be screened both in the US and in the UK. The new series, which has cost £5m to make, starts on children's TV channel CBeebies on June 15.

Mr Postgate told us: "It all seems to be going very well so far. The launch was well-received.

"We expect everyone to watch the

first couple of episodes, but it will be a nervous time waiting to see if they come back to watch the rest..

"The original Clangers had such a loyal audience, and we hope they will like the new ones too.

"We have made it so it will have a lasting appeal and not be a flash in the pan, hopefully.

"Some people have said they would liked to have seen it coming to BBC1, but shows are so targeted these days - it doesn't work like that anymore.

"There might be something on at Christmas on BBC1 or something like that. We have to wait to see, but it's a possibility."

If it does all go well, a movie would be great, he said. But for that to happen, it would need to be a major hit in America where it will be shown on NBC, potentially reaching 100 million homes.

He added of the film: "They sometimes do that sort of thing these days, don't they? I have thought about it, but I think it will need a few years to bed itself in.

"The NBC audience will be the blast-off point for making films, so it is a possibility. It will be the Ameri-



can audience that will decide if it gets done. With a decent budget for a film, you could make this series 15 times over with that sort of money. Movies are terribly expensive.

"I thought the idea of an hour and 30 minutes of the Clangers may be a little long, considering they don't talk, but I suppose you have the narrator over the top.

"And they made a film about Shaun the Sheep, so it is certainly doable, so long as you come with a good story. Films do need something monumental to happen in them to be a

success. It has to have something important to keep children enthralled for that long.

"Perhaps something can go missing from the Clangers' planet and needs to be found again. On TV, it's a more passive thing, you just sit back and let it wash over you. It would be nice to make a film."

Something new for the Clangers in the 11-minute episodes is their new found movements.

Peter Firmin, now 86, who is back for the new series as executive producer, said new technology means so

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BACK: Meet the Clangers class of 2015...returning to the BBC on June 15



CHANGES: Left, Michael Palin, Dan Postgate and Peter Firmin. Above, a 'naked' Clanger from the original TV series. Below, some of the earliest sketches by Peter Firmin for the original show which ran from 1969 to 1972.

much more can be done. Always an innovator, he said their original stop-motion characters were limited on what they could do with their company Smallfilms.

With new tech, he said: "They can dance, they can fly, they can jump. Our simple technology, with the feet tin-tacked to the surface of the planet meant we couldn't make them go up in the air except with strings."

"It's so much more exciting now because they can do so much more."

Some 52 episodes have been written, mostly by Daniel Postgate, and

are in the process of being filmed in two batches.

Purists will be delighted they still have that original knitted look, and of course the dustbin lids covering their 'moon' mound homes return as they should, because they go 'clang' when opened, hence the name.

Michael Palin said of being narrator: "I found it wonderful to watch with my own children. I found it very calming."

"Listening to Oliver Postgate's original voices and narrations, he just achieved almost effortlessly this

tone that wasn't too big, wasn't too small. Just inquiring. And I thought, 'well, you can't change that'. So I would have his voice and his approach and his timbre in the back of my mind and try to approach and be as close to his as possible."

Mr Postgate said: "We have written the first 26 for the first batch and now will be working on finishing up on the next 26."

Oliver Postgate, who also once lived in Blean, died in 2008, aged 83, at a nursing home in Broadstairs, sparking widespread tributes.



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LEGALITIES: Many view the Government's desire to replace the Human Rights Act as a bid to claim back power over the courts from Europe. The Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, above

Battle breaks out over plans for controversial Human Rights Act

Sarah Linney asks just what benefits and disadvantages we would experience if Tory plans goes ahead

ONE month after its election, and the Conservative Party this week insisted the Government was committed to what was perhaps one of its most controversial pre-election promises - to scrap our commitment to the Human Rights Act.

Brought in by Tony Blair's Labour government in 1998, it incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights, originally drawn up in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War, in UK law.

This enshrines such basic concepts as the right to life, the right to liberty, the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom from torture.

In addition, it allows recourse to the European Court of Human Rights - overruling decision made in the British court system rather than having to head to Strasbourg.

But the Conservatives - and the right-wing tabloid press - have suggested it has prevented the deportation of some foreign criminals and is being abused.

The Tories insist a British Bill of Rights would still protect key rights, but close what it sees as some of the loopholes.

Opponents, though, are gaining in strength - including many Tory backbenchers - and opposition parties.

When it failed to be mentioned in the Queen's Speech, many observers suggested the threat of it being defeated had made David Cameron cold on the plans. But, this week, senior Tory figures insisted it was still very much on the agenda.

Vince Maple is Labour leader on Midway Council. He said: "The chal-

lenge I would always throw out to anyone who says it should go is: which part of it don't you like?"

"Human rights are something people have died for. People saying they should somehow be scrapped on a whim clearly haven't looked at the issue with much thought."

"The Act sends a message to citizens in the UK and around the world that we are somewhere that values the rights of human beings; that we don't treat people in a discriminatory, disrespectful and inhumane way."

He said it was important for British citizens to have the right to have their cases heard at the European Court of Human Rights.

"There have been many times when UK citizens have had positive outcomes in the court," Cllr Maple added.

However, as Canterbury and Whitstable Tory MP Julian Brazier pointed out, Britain has always had an excellent human rights record - with or without the Act.

"The principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, such as the banning of torture, are essential for any civilised state," Mr Brazier said. "Our commitment to these principles long predates the Human Rights Act."

"The problem with the Act is that it not only put these rights into law, but empowered judges in Strasbourg to dictate how these rights are interpreted in our courts."

"This has allowed cunning lawyers to allow convicted terrorists, paedophiles, rapists and illegal immigrants to remain in the UK, often on the grounds of a 'right to a family life'."

Getting rid of these people becomes a legal nightmare. It took the efforts of six successive home secretaries to deport the known extremist preacher Abu Qatada to face trial in Jordan."

He said replacing the Act with a British Bill of Rights would "bring common sense back to our courts".

"Human rights legislation has extended far beyond the scope it was intended," Mr Brazier added.

Abu Qatada was detained under anti-terrorism laws in the UK in 2002 and fought for eight years against deportation to his native Jordan, where he claimed evidence extracted through torture would be used against him.

However, irrespective of the Human Rights Act, international human rights law prevents countries from sending people anywhere where they will be tortured.

Opponents of the proposals to ditch it say this is being overlooked by anti-Act propaganda.

The issue of the 'right to a family life', however, is hazier. Like almost all the rights enshrined in the Act, it can be overruled if necessary - just as the right to liberty is overruled if someone is jailed for a serious crime.

But, as Ashford MP Damian Green pointed out, things are not working quite as they were intended.

"We should make Parliament and the courts the ultimate decision-makers over laws in this country," Mr Green said.

"I want to see us write the European Convention on Human Rights into our own law, and reduce the powers of the European Court of Human Rights, so our Supreme Court has to



CHANGE: Julian Brazier

take account of its rulings, but not simply pass them into law.

"The latter is what the courts have done since the Human Rights Act was passed, and it has been contentious: if you can't deport terrorists, that's when you get problems."

"I think we can do this. The Germans have a constitutional court which declares itself the ultimate arbiter of German law."

"The French, however, have problems similar to us: their supreme court simply transposes judgments of the European Court of Human Rights into French law, and they have people they want to deport but can't."

However, he said it was important for British citizens to still have access to the European Court of Human Rights - and that any new British Bill of Rights should continue to enshrine all the declarations of the European Convention on Human Rights.

"I think it's sensible to delay the

legislation until the government has done a proper consultation," Mr Green added.

Dartford MP Gareth Johnson agreed. He told KoS this week: "The decisions it makes should not be binding on us, and the court has moved far beyond what it was defined to do."

"I would prefer to see a British Bill of Rights that concentrates not just on human rights but on human responsibilities. It must be right that we have British judges determining British law."

However, Gordon Cowan, Labour leader on Kent County Council, said it would be unwise to throw out the baby with the human rights bathwater.

"The Human Rights Act is there for the protection of all people, over everything from phone hacking to the treatment of disabled people in care homes," Cllr Cowan said.

"It has benefited countless people in the UK."

"If there's a flaw with any Act of Parliament, you should amend the act. It doesn't mean to say that the law is an ass, so let's get rid of it all."

"It just means that perhaps you need to tighten up the act and make sure it is benefiting the people it should benefit."

"Weighed against one small issue, there are a hundred things here that protect the people of our country."

What do you think? Should we keep or ditch the Human Rights Act? Share your views and join the debate. Write to us at: The Editor, KoS, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1PP. Or email us at editorial@kosmedia.co.uk.



CONTROVERSIAL: The Dartford Crossing has generated hundreds of column inches

After six months of Dart Charge, have the changes been worth it?

Maria Chiorando talks to the man in charge of the crossing's under fire remote payment system...

THE first six months of Dart Charge have been mired in controversy.

The new free-flowing scheme at the Dartford Crossing has been in place since the end of November and means motorists no longer have to stop at toll booths, but instead have their number plates recorded on camera and must then pay by phone, online, in-store or post, within 24 hours – and failure to do so will land users with a fine.

Some users have complained about glitches in the system, and unfair charges, as well as foreign toll dodgers.

But, the new system was put in place to improve congestion – and so far, data shows this is the case.

Nigel Gray is Highways England's project director for Dart Charge. The company have been overseeing the project. He says: "The system has shaved nine minutes off south bound journeys, and four off northbound, which we expect to see increase when all the building work is completely finished by the end of July."

Currently, there are still some booths on the northbound entrance.

"They are there to comply with EU legislation," says Mr Grey.

"The barriers keep people out of the tunnels if there has been an incident.

"The tunnels are different heights, so some vehicles can fit in the east bore which is bigger, and not the west tunnels. In order to insulate and stop vehicles that won't fit, we are installing a very sophisticated safety system, that has been tested off-site.

"Once this is installed, HGVs will be much less disruptive to the service, as

before, all the barriers would come down stopping traffic, whereas when the new system is in place – from next weekend – the lorry will be isolated, and the rest of the traffic will keep flowing."

A familiar complaint about the toll is that it should be free, with Edmund King, the president of AA saying: "It is particularly galling that any toll remains at Dartford.

"The tolls and charges were supposed to be lifted in 2003 when the cost of the scheme had been met. The new scheme has undoubtedly eased the congestion at busy times but, for some, there is a new concern regarding the behind-the-scenes bureaucracy that accompanies this supposedly high-tech, non-stop tolling."

Mr Gray says: "A toll taken in 2003 suggested that removing the charge would increase traffic by 17 per cent – which would overburden the crossing. While we understand the frustration of paying for it, unusually, all money raised goes to transport improvements – it is ring fenced by the government.

"In fact, since the new system has been introduced, the number of people using local discount schemes means the crossing costs less for many users."

And according to Mr Gray, Highways England is committed to improving the system for the local users who have had problems, with registering, being double-charged, or even contacting head office using the phone system.

"We didn't anticipate the scale of the problem people would have with registering," admits Mr Gray. "So we have started running surgeries in Thurrock and Dartford for local people, if they

want to discuss the problems face to face. We will be running these days for the foreseeable future.

"We will be playing it by ear a bit, depending on how people use this 9-5 service. If people want it to run later, so they can go after work, that is something we would look at changing. This surgery will be by appointment only, and will enable people to see advisors."

More recently, controversy has raged around foreign drivers, who some motorists believe have dodged the tolls. AA spokesman Luke Bosdett said: "This is a two-layered issue.

"First, there is a great temptation not to pay the charge – which can be the same for British drivers abroad. The second is that it can be difficult for foreign drivers to know how to pay for the toll. The website is in English, and there are no payzones at either the ferry terminal or Eurotunnel. I believe the authorities are using various means to get foreign toll-dodgers to pay, and it will be interesting to see how effective this is."

Mr Gray confirms there are agencies in place to track down those who evade the fee. "It's important that the charge is fair," he says.

So after six months of the new system, which cost between £48 million and £62 million to put in place, how does Highways England feel it's fared?

Mr Gray says: "While there have been more problems than we would have liked, overall, it has been a worthwhile project.

"It has been great for business – thousands and thousands of business time has, and will, be saved. Lots of the traffic at the crossing is goods vehicles,



DIRECTOR: Nigel Gray

having them constantly queuing is not good for the UK economy.

"This is a medium term solution, which will buy us 10 years – you won't see the levels of congestion we had in November before the scheme – unless of course there is an accident.

"The next thing will be looking at a new lower Thames crossing, which will have to go through the proper consultation process. But cutting down on congestion means the Dartford Crossing will hold until the early 2020s."

Dartford MP Gareth Johnson has voiced his support for the new system, saying: "There has been a noticeable improvement in traffic flows since the new system was introduced.

"No-one is claiming that this system will end any chance of there being traffic jams but it will alleviate the worst of the congestion that Dartford has suffered for too long."

SIX MONTHS OF DART CHARGE IN NUMBERS

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- 70 per cent of crossings are made by account holders
- 12,000 new members of the local resident scheme
- That's a growth of over 37 per cent
- Southbound journeys are nine minutes faster
- Northbound journeys are four minutes faster
- The crossing was built to accommodate 135,000 daily crossings
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- Foreign driver compliance rate is 87 per cent



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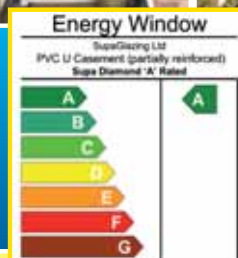
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Heatwave? Not quite yet says BBC weather expert Rachel

Temperatures may have soared on Friday, but it is unlikely to be the start of three months of non-stop sunshine. **Chris Murphy** finds out more.

TALK of the start of a heatwave after a scorching Friday may be premature - according to BBC South East weather presenter Rachel Mackley.

Temperatures reached 25C, bringing with it thunderstorms too, prompting hopes the summer has finally started after a gloomy start to June.

But we should rein in our hopes, according to the TV star, who says the sun will shine...but not just yet.

The weather presenter said: "There has been a lot about a heatwave on the way...and although it the temperatures jumped by 10C on Friday, I don't think we're going to be experiencing a heatwave just yet.

"From mid-week, high pressure was in charge bringing much more settled conditions with light winds and lots of sunshine allowing temperatures to rise but as the winds come round to a northeasterly through the weekend, temperatures will fall back to the low 20s before warming up again next week. Not a heatwave, but definitely much more summery weather than we've had so far."

A spokesman for the Met Office explained why their computer systems can not look too far ahead.

She said: "We have a limit of about two weeks in the future.

"There is a lot of research going on in to seasonal forecasts. The atmosphere is a chaotic system - it's like a fluid.

"The further ahead you go, the further away from original conditions you are and the more difficult it is to predict what will happen. Things are changing every second.

"We gather as many observations as possible to get an initial idea of what the atmosphere is doing. That data is fed into our super-computer models which then uses physics and maths to come out with the future state of the atmosphere.

"The computer puts it all in to grid boxes and then analyses changes in each one. But things start to diverge significantly the further ahead you look."

However, some forecasters still like to look to the signs from Mother Nature to predict long term conditions.

And according to one of those, we should be in for a decent summer - but not a complete scorcher.

That's according to Dave King - better known as Dave the Weather - who believes looking back at previous weather patterns over the years can predict trends.

His summer prediction comes by observing what the Sun was doing last Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

His amazing skills spotting trends in weather



RAIN: Will it be umbrellas in Whitstable?

patterns by using nature is now famed worldwide.

He also uses the ideas of meteorologist Alexander Buchan, who was born in 1829, and is credited with coming up with the idea of a weather map as an aid to forecasting the weather.

Mr King told us it will be a changeable summer, and not quite the 'best for a decade' that some have been promising.

This clashes with some rather more conventional predictions, which suggested we were in for three months of glorious sunshine and heat - predictions fanned by some of the more excitable weather-obsessed national tabloids.

Mr King said: "To give an idea what our summer will look like, we need to go back to Christmas Day for nature's six month advance notice.

"I need to look at the six-plus hours of sunshine that day, plus New Year's Day.

"The sun on Christmas Day gives good fruit and grain harvests. Christmas Day sun gave us a cold wet Easter too, plus six snowfalls before June 1, although not here in the south east. That is one snowfall for each hour of sunshine on Christmas day. It snowed last Thursday on Blancathra in the Lake District.

"Dissecting and translating all that nature told me from these two days is very accurate indeed, as nature is never wrong. The interpretation falls down at times, but is getting better all



“ Next week will not be a heatwave and I don’t think we’re going to be experiencing a heatwave, but it will definitely be much more summery ”

Rachel Mackley,
BBC South East weather presenter

SUNSHINE: Rachel Mackley says the weather is set to improve - but it may not be a case of ‘phew, what a scorcher’ just yet... Picture: BBC

the time.
“So, we will have a good grain harvest which needs dampness, heat and sunshine, so we’ll have dampness and heat in July, and sunshine in August with heat and dry harvest conditions.”

“The Fruit harvest must have no frosts in May because frost kills the

blossoms. Then we have rain and sunshine to swell and ripen the fruit. There was no frost at all in May.

“It was cold and wet, but to have a good summer you need a cold wet May.

“So the fruit harvest is guaranteed – just see the beautiful cherries this year already, a good year for plums

too, as for all the fruits, both wild and cultivated.

“I predict only one hay harvest this year - that is June, just look at the colourful rich meadows out there.

“Soon the dry will come for a perfect hot sunny, dry, calm hay harvest. The same for the pea harvest too.

“June will be, for the greater part,

dry warm sunny calm, with some hotter days for sure. But a word of caution, the hottest days in June give the coldest days in the following February. The end of the month, tends to be damp. I see a damp end to the month.

“July will also be damper than average, but warm - excellent grain growing conditions.

“There is a reliable old saying ‘two full moons in the month means a wet month’.

“There are full moons on the second and 31, which is a Blue Moon, hence the saying ‘once in a blue moon’, as they turn up about every four years or so.

“To compound this, all the moons for the month are wet moons. This is according to my 12th century moon chart, which is about 90 per cent accurate.

“There may be a warmer dry period around July 11 to 15. The 14th is one of the hottest days of the year too, but July will be damp and warm.

“August is a mixed bag – maybe from six to 20th there will be some real summer, with 11th to 15th close to the hot period. After that, it’s all downhill for a bit.

“So, will there be a scorching hot three months? Not really.”

And it’s going to be bad news for winter haters. He said: “Another caution comes for the coming winter - it will be hard long and cold.

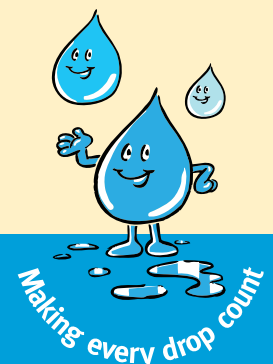
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Tattoo hygiene scheme launches

The new voluntary rating began in Medway this month, but it has been met with mixed reactions...

by Molly Kersey

molly.kersey@archant.co.uk

THIS week saw the launch of a new hygiene rating scheme for tattooists and semi-permanent make-up artists in Medway.

In a similar way to food hygiene ratings, the voluntary scheme will see tattooists given a score of one to four - determined by how clean and hygienic their operations are.

One is the lowest score that can be achieved, two is satisfactory, the basic minimum standard, and three and four are good and very good respectively.

Once they have been given their scores the tattoo studios can then display a certificate, which proves their accreditation.

The scheme is supported by the Tattoo and Piercing Industry Union.

Medway council's portfolio holder for community safety Peter Hicks said: "This scheme will enable customers to make an educated choice about which business to select and it will allow the council to drive up standards of those who may not yet be operating at the required level."

The new scheme officially launched on Monday.

A Medway Council spokesman said that it had been developed in response



SAFETY: Medway Council say the scheme is aiming to make people aware of the risks and protect their health.

to concerns about the transmission of infections such as Hepatitis B and HIV, which could be contracted from unhygienic procedures.

He added: "A particular concern lies with unregistered practitioners who operate illegally from their home kitchen or bedroom."

"The aim of the scheme is to make the public aware of the risks of skin

piercing, promote consumer choice and protect public health, whilst showcasing those businesses who operate to a high standard of hygiene."

However, the scheme has been met with some scepticism.

Mike Jay, of Andy Jay Studios in Rochester, said: "I have looked at it and studied it and I don't see the point of

it. As far as I can see, they are trying to cut down on people working at home, which is obviously a good thing, don't get me wrong."

"The problem of people tattooing at home absolutely, definitely needs to be dealt with. It's a major issue."

"In the professional industry we are in, people working from home are very much frowned upon and any-

thing done to prevent that is a major benefit to the health and safety of the public, but I can't understand how a star rating on already qualified studios is going to make any difference to that whatsoever. We are already health approved."

"The people tattooing at home aren't really going to come up and say 'please give me four stars'."

"It's illegal to tattoo at home full stop, so they aren't going to own up to doing it. All licensed studios already have an operating license."

"As far as I can see this is putting more regulation on already regulated studios."

He added: "People go to tattooists at home because they don't want to pay any money. Running a professional tattoo studio isn't cheap."

He said that a lot of money went towards maintaining hygiene standards and updating their facilities.

"That's where it's going - paying for that safety," he said.

"It's not certain whether I am going to sign up to it yet."

"My customers say that it won't make any difference if I haven't got stars in my window."

"This has been a tattoo studio since 1975 and I am the fourth generation family."

"Nearly all of my business comes from personal recommendation."



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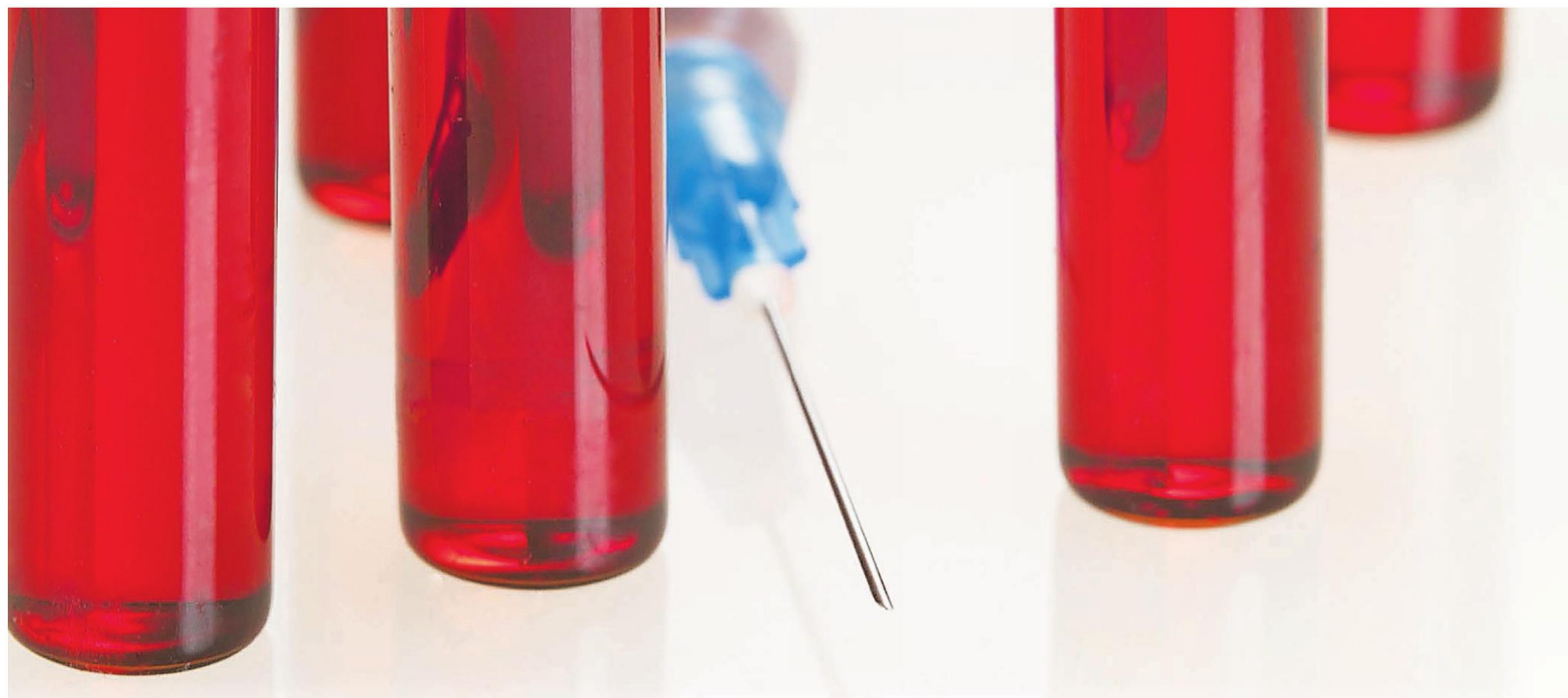


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Calls for public inquiry grow as PM promises scandal update

Over the last three weeks, KoS has highlighted the blood contamination scandal - a shocking state of affairs which saw the NHS using blood, often donated by prisoners and drug addicts and crucially not checked, being used widely between 1970 and 1991. And this despite warnings of the risks. The result was many people being infected with the likes of HIV and hepatitis C. Now KoS, along with parent company Archant, is calling for justice for those whose lives have been cut short or ruined with a fair financial settlement and a public inquiry to establish just exactly what went wrong.

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By Chris Britcher & David Powles
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

THERE have been some signs in the last six months the tide may be turning and campaigners hope their message is finally getting through.

Just this week, after pledging an additional £25million compensation package, prime minister David Cameron told the House of Commons a further statement would be made before the summer recess.

He added: "All of us as MPs have come across people, who for no fault of their own, were infected with blood contaminated with hepatitis C - and that has had very serious consequenc-

es for them."

Victims and their families - who so far have received derisory pay-outs on a controversial sliding scale dependant on just how badly their health has deteriorated - will be hoping their calls are met.

Politically, however, there appears to be progress.

As well as Scotland's Penrose Report and the January 2015 All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into the financial support given to victims, in January several MPs debated the scandal.

But there still remains much to achieve.

The nearest there has been to a full inquiry on English cases came in 2007 when Lord Archer of Sandwell chaired an independently funded hearing.

The report suggested UK authorities had been slow to react, but accepted it was hard to directly apportion blame.

He said the main responsibility for the tragedy rested with the US suppli-

“ Government needs to be waking up to the idea this is the fault of its predecessors, and do what it can. Proper compensation needs to be provided. ”

Mike Eddy,
Labour leader, Dover council

ers of the contaminated blood products and that commercial interests appeared to have been given a higher priority than patient safety.

He also said a public inquiry should have been held earlier and criticised the decision of the Department of Health not to give evidence publicly and hold back certain documents.

This is a position that is supported

by others. Mike Eddy is the Labour opposition leader of Dover council. He said: "This scandal is one the big problems we have inherited from Margaret Thatcher's time, and it is because cheap providers in the US were used, without any concern for the quality of the blood products. This is a result of trying to do something on the cheap - and in health care, cheap doesn't work. You need to pay the right price for the right product."

"You can get leeches for free in some African rivers - but they're not very good for treating diseases."

"The government needs to be waking up to the idea this is the fault of their predecessors, and do what they can. It's too late for many people's health, but certainly, proper compensation needs to be provided."

"The apology given by David Cameron was like a lot of his apologies; a bit lack lustre."

Unsurprisingly, some of the country's Tories are very supportive of Mr Cameron's position on the scandal.

Sittingbourne and Sheppey MP Gordon Henderson said: "I believe the prime minister is very committed to addressing the scandal. In the last parliament he gave a very explicit apology. My position is that I will be supporting the actions that are being taken for an all party group on contaminated blood and will continue to do that."

He is supported by South Thanet MP Craig Mackinlay who said: "It's the most appalling situation and it's very sad for those affected. I am very supportive of the people who have been affected by the situation. The prime minister has apologised to them and I stand by that apology. There are people in my constituency who have been affected by the contaminated blood."

"The NHS have learned from the situation, but as we have seen, there are illnesses that we don't always know about. There may be another vi-

Continues on page 20

Special Report: Blood contamination scandal...Special Report: Blood contamination scandal

WHAT IS THE BLOOD SCANDAL?

THOUSANDS of people were infected with the hepatitis C (hep C) virus after being given contaminated NHS blood products between 1970 and 1991.

Many were haemophiliacs - an affliction which prevents the blood from clotting and, as a result, can lead to uncontrollable bleeding.

However, many took a product called Factor VIII which was injected into them. Comprised of multiple blood donations, it allowed the blood to naturally clot for a temporary period. Depending on how bad your condition, many took it daily or just occasionally.

During this period an estimated 32,000 people, scores of them from Kent, were infected through tainted blood and blood products, many of which were commercially manufactured and sold, without safety checks, to the British government from the USA - in addition to unchecked British donations.

These products came from numerous suspect and high-risk sources, including prisons, drug addicts and the homeless, but the government continued to import them even after being given warnings they carried a risk of infection.

More than 1,500 people were infected with HIV along with hep C. It is estimated the scandal has cost around 2,000 lives so far. That is a figure which continues to rise.

In terms of death toll, it is the 15th largest peacetime disaster in British history.

Although more than 30,000 people are thought to have been given contaminated blood products, only 6,000 people are estimated to know it.

Among the haemophilia population in the UK it is thought almost all who took the treatment during the period may be infected.

Steve Dymond, 59, from Broadstairs was born with haemophilia and was infected with hepatitis C. He has cirrhosis of the liver, is under going a cancer scare as a result, and saw his family and career ambitions devastated by the effects of the illness. He is unable to get a job as a result of his health and he and his wife are forced to share the home of his 85-year-old mother-in-law.

"It's difficult not to be completely consumed by the insanity of it all," he told KoS.

"We try hard not to get caught in that state of mind.

"The most vicious wish is that anyone responsible would lose their homes, their pensions like those who suffered did.

"The best we can hope for is the people who make a lot of appalling, careless decisions, who defended indefensible decisions, still have to look at themselves in the mirror and somewhere there must be something which wakes them up at 2am.

"That's what we cling on to."



ACTION: David Cameron has promised a further announcement on the scandal later this year

Continues from page 19

rus around the corner."

In other countries criminal cases have been pursued where it has been proven warnings were ignored. That has been proven to have happened in the UK, so why has there been no prosecutions sought?

A Department of Health spokesperson said: "With the exception of a very small number of cases where compensation has been paid out due to proven negligence or fault under the Customer Protection Act 1987, no liability has ever been proven or accepted. Successive governments have, however, voluntari-

ly established financial assistance schemes for those affected, which to date have paid out over £365m to affected individuals."

However, there could be thousands more who were infected by blood products but do not know about it. Hepatitis C, which attacks the liver, is known as the 'silent killer' as its presence is

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Special Report: Blood contamination scandal...Special Report: Blood contamination scandal



'TERRIBLE': MP Damian Green says he wants 'truth to emerge'

often only detected once it has caused serious damage to the organ.

A Department of Health spokesperson said: "There have been two look back exercises with the aim of tracing those with bleeding disorders that may have been infected from NHS provided blood products, as well as those infected with HIV and hepatitis C.

"If anyone is concerned that they may have been infected with hepatitis C they should contact their GP, a sexual health clinic, a GUM (genitourinary medicine) clinic or drug treatment service, all of which offer

testing for hepatitis C which can be done using a blood test."

For many, the fact hepatitis C - which is passed from blood-to-blood - is an illness associated with drug takers, who pass on the illness by sharing needles, adds an additional stigma.

Ashford MP Damian Green added: "It's a terrible situation. It was clearly appalling mismanagement at the time, and it's a tribute to so many people for digging away at it that we have got to a point where there could be a full inquiry.

"I would like to see the whole truth emerge, and we will find out more in due course."

KENT ON SUNDAY SAYS: THEY NEED JUSTICE AND THEY NEED IT NOW

YOU would be hard pushed to find a group of people as repeatedly let down by the state as the thousands affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

This failure runs deep and is a scar on the good work that those tasked with serving the public so often do.

Go back to the start and a series of ill-judged decisions have ultimately set so many families down a path that no-one would want to contend with.

For whatever reason, be it to save cash or with good intentions at heart, the decision all those years ago to import and use unchecked blood and blood products into the UK was a terrible mistake.

But for those products to continue to be used for several years after the potential dangers were known is nothing short of negligent. In some countries they regarded it as criminally so.

If, since then, all had been done to make the lives of those poisoned as simple and pain-free as possible, this would probably be a matter that could be consigned to the history books. A stain on the country's history - but one that had been wiped away.

But this stain lingers.

While it may be too late for criminal prosecution to be brought on anyone found to have been involved in those early ill-fated decisions, it is entirely understandable that campaigners feel bitter at a lack of accountability

over the issue.

We welcome the government's pledge to make historical documents relating to the issue available to public scrutiny through the National Archive.

However, all that may end up doing is add to the campaigners' sense of injustice, should they be able to read of the many failings to impact them, but not feel anything can be or has been done about them.

There has been an All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into the financial support provided to victims - but we support the campaign group's calls for a public inquiry into the events that led to the tragedies and that lessons that could still be learnt.

The least these people deserve is to have their day in a public forum.

That cannot be it, however. What good is such an inquiry if sufferers and their families have to continue to live in poverty because illness caused by government mistakes makes them unable to provide for themselves?

In the Republic of Ireland, victims received an acceptable lump sum payment for their agony and pain, along with regular support, and that should happen in England too.

It is estimated such a payout would cost £1.5 billion, roughly the same compensation given to victims of the Equitable Life financial scandal.

Sir Edward Leigh, MP for Gainsbor-

ough, was right when he said in January's House of Commons debate on the issue: "We caused this and we have to put it right... They (Equitable Life victims) have lost their savings, not their life... why do we baulk at similar figures for those whose whole lives have been ruined and ultimately many of them lost?"

On top of this, consistent levels of financial support need to be given to all hepatitis C sufferers, no matter how serious the government believes their problems to be. That also needs to apply to widows and their families.

It is good news the new drug, predicted to potentially end suffering for many victims, will soon be available on the NHS - but the delay in rolling it out is unacceptable and will mean months of unnecessary pain for many.

And with the government's own figures suggesting the true scale of this problem is not yet known, an awareness campaign to spread knowledge is essential, as is adoption of the one recommendation from Scotland's Penrose Inquiry, that anyone who had a blood transfusion before 1991 should be tested for hepatitis C if they have not already done so.

It is too late for the devastation caused by this scandal to be undone. But, with a new government in place, it's about time some of the damage was at least repaired.

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Traffic woes fail to take shine off the return of music legend Sir Elton John

Ticket sales may have been a little sluggish, but Sir Elton finally sold out his outdoor show at Detling last Sunday and delighted fans. But, as **Chris Murphy** reports, there were big delays reaching the site

ORGANISERS have hailed last weekend's concert by music legend Sir Elton John a big success - but apologised to thousands of fans after they were stuck in two hour traffic jams to get both in and out of the venue.

Some 14,000 attended the sold-out outdoor show at the County Showground in Detling last Sunday.

The 68-year-old thrilled the audience as he ran through his greatest hits at the Kent Event Centre venue, near Maidstone.

But many felt the sparkle was taken off the event by traffic problems get in and out of the show.

When the show finished, the A249 soon became an extended car park. Some reported 30 minute journeys lasting over three hours.

Getting in was no easier either. One woman reported going back home without seeing the show because of the jams. Seats for the show cost up to £88 with those attending having to pay a further £6.50 for car parking. Many were held up to such an extent they missed the start of the show.

A statement from the Kent Event Centre said: "We are aware there were some delays on the road accessing the centre owing to a number of reasons and that some visitors attending the concert experienced road traffic delays which is very unfortunate; we are sorry that some people had this experience.

"There was a crash close to the M20 roundabout at junction seven on the north bound carriageway which contributed to queues to enter the venue grounds. In addition, our understanding, based on similar events, was that the arrival of the audience was expected to come in over a number of hours between 2pm and 6pm and, based on that information, a traffic plan was created.

"However this staggered arrival did not happen, we believe potentially due to the fact that it had been raining very heavily and attendees delayed their arrival, resulting in a high volume of arrivals at the same time.

"Once the congestion was identified, an additional entrance to the ground was opened to help to clear traffic.



HIT: The one-man hit machine romped through favourite tunes before a crowd of 14,000

"The vast majority of fans were seated to watch Elton John as the performance began. A very small number of people entered the show ground after Elton John's performance was under way.

"Staff at the venue acted in accordance with our guidelines and to the best of our knowledge were polite and helpful. Our exit strategy for the concert worked as planned and all car parks were clear in less than 90 minutes.

"We have had a lot of positive feedback on the event and it is unfortunate that the traffic problems caused some issues on this occasion. We are delighted to have attracted a world-class artist like Sir Elton John to the



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ROCKET MAN: Fans braved the weather and were rewarded with the rain stopping as the show got under way

county and hope to host similar quality concerts at this venue in the future.

"We will definitely be undertaking a review of this event and will continue to work closely with promoters,

local highways agencies and public services to see how we can avoid any unnecessary traffic delays."

Ben Martin, from Marshall Arts, the promoters behind the event, told KoS: "We do feel sorry for those that

were caught up in the jams. The traffic system was not our responsibility, but I think I can safely say the crowd enjoyed watching a great show.

"And the sun came out to brighten up the end of a gloomy day at just the

right time.

"This certainly has not put us off coming to Kent again sometime in the future."

The flamboyant singer, who holds the record for the UK's biggest selling

single with his 1997 re-make of his classic Candle in the Wind, was last in Kent was 2006.

He performed in Canterbury at the home of Kent County Cricket Club.

No stranger to the area over his long and hugely successful career, he has also played shows at the Hop Farm in Paddock Wood and at Leeds Castle.

Mr Martin added: "I am delighted to say as soon as the support act walked on stage, it was like a switch was flicked and the sun came out. I couldn't have paid for better timing.

"The show from our side, and I was there myself, saw the crowd absolutely loving it. I was backstage when Elton went on and the crowd were on their feet.

"It looked like they were having a glorious time.

"The upside was the sunshine and no rain, but the downside was the temperature dipped because there was no cloud cover.

"I feel people didn't worry about that as they were on their feet and dancing along.

"We have had great success with Elton in Kent. Given the large number of people who want to see him, we will have to wait and see if we return. I am glad to see this latest show was a sell-out.

"There are not many artists in the business who can sell this level of tickets."

The highlights in the 20-plus song list included Bennie & The Jets, Philadelphia Freedom, Rocketman, Your Song, Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me, I'm Still Standing, Saturday Night and Crocodile Rock.

The Elton John tour continues around the UK this week.

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Fostering is possibly one of the most rewarding things you will ever do. Making a real difference to children's lives is a unique and immensely satisfying privilege.

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Next Step Fostering was established over 25 years ago by Maureen and Alb Ward – who were foster carers themselves – and therefore had personal experience of caring for vulnerable children. Next Step Fostering remains a family company to this day, with Registered Manager Neil McCarthy, and Director Lesley Ward's involvement with the company stretching back over twenty years.

Next Step provides a range of fostering services through offices in Kent, London and The Thames Valley and work in partnership with many Local Authorities across the South East of England.

A national shortage of foster carers means that children who cannot live with their family are being moved away from their home communities, resulting in a change of school, community, friends and religious contacts. Every day, Next Step receives child referrals from Local Authorities, but due to the high levels of demand, do not have sufficient families to meet the needs of the many children being referred.

There is a particular need for Parent and Child foster families where a parent and baby or young child are placed with a foster family rather than in a residential unit; and for foster families that can care for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

As a family run company, Next Step Fostering is able to offer a personal, individual service to its foster carers and children. Supervision, support and training can be tailored to individual needs and foster carers have an open invitation to approach Lesley Ward directly to discuss any issues they may have.

Fostering a child is not an easy task, but it is extremely rewarding – and thanks to the generous allowance Next Step Fostering pays, many people give up unfulfilling jobs to undertake a career in fostering, where they feel they can really make a difference to young lives.

Mary Cattell, an ex-carer herself and now Manager of the Chatham office, said "People often worry that they won't be suitable, based on things they have heard from friends or the media, but I would encourage anyone thinking about fostering to speak to us directly. We can answer all of their questions about the type of people we are looking for and what fostering is like."

If you are considering a career in fostering or simply want to learn more, call into Next Step Fostering's Chatham office, at 85 High Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4EE.

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Fighting to nurse NHS trust back to rude health

He earns £294,000 as the interim chief executive of East Kent hospital trust, tasked with turning its fortunes round. **Sarah Linney** finds out his plans

STAFF shortages, risks to patients' safety and a culture of bullying and harassment.

Last year's report on the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust - which runs the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, the QEOM in Margate and the Kent & Canterbury, made pretty damning reading.

The trust was rated as "inadequate" by health regulator Monitor, placed in special measures and accused of "serious failings".

What's more, it has admitted it is at the very first stage of considering proposals to shift A&E care from the QEOM and William Harvey to a centralised one at Canterbury. News which has raised considerable alarm among the local population.

Enter a new, interim, chief executive, tasked with turning its fortunes around and all for a headline grabbing £294,000 salary - double that of prime minister David Cameron.

Chris Bown indisputably has a good track record - he helped transform the fortunes of Stafford Hospital. The question now is can he make a difference here?

"People do not come to work to be bullied, harassed or disrespected, whether that comes from a manager or a colleague. These things are not tolerated," Mr Bown told KoS.

"We have been undertaking a programme of change, so that people can come forward if someone is making their life a misery - and people are coming forward more.

"We have very similar challenges to the rest of the NHS. Recruitment is a challenge, as there is a shrinking market.

"We have recruited nurses from Spain and Italy to help with the shortfall, but a lot of it is being covered by agency nurses and we are looking to recruit overseas again. We want to recruit as many British staff as we can, but everyone is fishing in that pond."

The trust is due to be visited by the Care Quality Commission next month, but the outcome is uncertain.

"Whether we have made enough progress to come out of special measures, who can know?" Mr Bown said.

"But coming out won't be the end of the journey, just the beginning. We are working to put in place programmes of improvement that will carry on for years."

The trust also has a deficit of £8 million, which many suspect is the reason why it is talking about shutting two of three A&E departments.

But Mr Bown denies that this is the main motivation and says the closures would be better for patients.

"Things cannot stay the same - it is not sustainable, clinically or financially," he said.

"This is driven by the availability of the clinical workforce. Recruiting A&E consultants is very difficult. There is a national shortage of them. All hospitals are faced with the same thing.

"If money was no object, we would have ex-

actly the same problem. We will listen to what people have to say, but patient safety has to be central to any plan."

And he says the plans are driven, not by management, but by doctors.

"It is not our plan - it is an option that clinicians feel would provide effective and safe services, as the limited number of doctors and specialists could be concentrated in one place to provide 24/7 cover, which is not the case across three sites," he said.

"We have been doing this for years in the NHS where there's proven clinical benefit in travelling further. If you have a serious heart attack in Margate, you are flown or taken by ambulance to the William Harvey Hospital, where they can apply a stent and undertake complex procedures very quickly - and the clinical outcomes for heart attacks have improved across east Kent. Paramedics are highly skilled people, and an ambulance is like a mini operating theatre.

"If it was my family, I would want them taken to a hospital that was fully equipped with senior doctors and special equipment."

One might suggest that not employing a manager on a salary of £1,400 a day might be a good way to help the trust start recouping that £8 million.

However, Mr Bown points out that he is in charge of an organisation with a turnover of more than £500 million and 7,500 staff - and is working pretty much seven days a week.



BOSS: Chris Bown earns more than the PM...but has a proven track record of success

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Guides and Scouts still 'thriving' and offering adventure and fun

Molly Kersey speaks to people behind Kent organisations to see if they have stood the test of time

BUILDING campfires, tying knots and learning signs and salutes.

These are traditional images that might spring to mind when discussing the Guides and Scouts.

Born in the early 1900s - led by Robert Baden-Powell and his sister Agnes - the groups have been around for more than 100 years, surviving two world wars and celebrating their centenary in 2009.

They meet once a week, giving children the chance to take part in games and activities with girls and boys their own age.

And with high-profile members including Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret - who enrolled as a Guide and Brownie respectively in 1937, the organisations have an impressive history.

So have they stood the test of time?

Louise Barkes, Girlguiding development worker for Kent West, thinks so.

"We have over half a million members with Girlguiding, and we have got over 100,000 volunteers," she told KoS.

And moving with the times has been a key part of this.

"It's all very relevant. As the times change the girl's interests change and so do the activities that we offer," she said.

"We have listened to what members are interested in. We have some badges now around body



INTERNATIONAL: There are Scout groups all around the world

confidence and supported the No More Page 3 campaign, founded by Lucy Anne Holmes.

"These are things that our members told us they were passionate about and wanted to be involved with."

Simon Carter, assistant director in the media relations department of the Scout Association, said: "We are thriving in membership. We currently have 550,000 members.

"We have grown especially in teenagers. We have got 40,000 of those now.

"We have made sure that the programme we offer young people is active and interesting. For the teenage range you do lots of overseas trips.

"Young people of that age like to care about others, so we have introduced a number of opportunities that help them work in their community and have adventures around the world."

He said adventurer and TV presenter Bear Grylls, who is the UK's Chief Scout, had helped.

"Bear Grylls has helped tremendously because he's 'super cool' and people want to become like him. Also, the Duchess of Cambridge is a volunteer adult, so people think 'if she is busy and she can find the time to help out occasionally then I can as well,'" he said.

So what can people expect if they join the Scouts or Guides?

Some traditional elements have remained, with most groups likely to perform the three finger salute - made with the thumb of the right hand holding down the little finger - when greeting other Scouts or as a mark of respect at ceremonies.

Taps, a short song, is also sung by many Guides and Scouts at the end of their session.

But, what happens during the weekly meetings can change a great deal.

Ms Barkes said: "For one group it could be completely different to another group."

Steve Newton, leader of the Dartford Cambrisa Sea Scout group, said: "We teach them kayaking, sailing, rowing, power-boating and everything water based on top of the normal scout things.

"Some children get the opportunity to do that sort of thing but not normally at prices that are affordable to most.

"I think it gives opportunities to bond with other children and learn different skill sets. Schools don't really teach the out of bound stuff and lighting fires."

The organisations are open to every child, with a small subscription fee required.

Each of the groups are split into three age range categories - Rainbows, Brownies and Guides and Cubs, Beavers and Scouts.

Mr Newton said that some children who joined the group were very introverted, but you could see a gradual transformation.

"I have seen that, especially with the sailing side. It gives them an aim to work towards when they see the older children, who are sailing really well.

"There is a complete progression, not just in those skills but in their life really. There are

some children that are very shy and don't mix very well but they may well be some of the best sailors, but just haven't tried it to find out. When they become good at something they will naturally become more outgoing."

Ms Barkes said that there could be real benefits to joining.

"It's mainly to build confidence and self belief," she said.

"It's all different backgrounds and groups are mixed, it gives a different opportunity to what they would have within their normal everyday lives."

Mr Carter thinks there can be future employment benefits too.

"When you look at what industry values it's team work, leadership, organisation, and young people who can do that get on well in their career and those are the skills that we teach young people. Further education is important but so is the ability to work in a team, lead a team. Everything that you do when you are a scout," he said.

He said that while youth membership is thriving, adults are required to help.

"The challenge we have is needing enough adults to deliver the project for young people. For every four to five young people you need another adult," he said

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DAZZLING: Organisers will be hoping for good weather to shine on the popular annual event



CHINOOK: Helicopter is just one of the many attractions



CROWDS: All 18,000 tickets have sold out well in advance

Sell-out success as flight festival gets ready for take off once more

It's up, up and away for Biggin Hill event which opens its gates next weekend. **Chris Murphy** reports

ORGANISERS of one of the county's biggest and most eagerly anticipated air shows this week sold out of tickets for the Biggin Hill Festival of Flight.

The show takes place on Saturday, June 13, and will feature a host of top entertainment both in the skies and on the ground.

But if you haven't got a ticket now, then it's too late - all 18,000 advance tickets have been on sale since April and the last was sold on Thursday morning. There will be no tickets available on the day.

The airfield, which played a key role during the Second World War and is now a major private airport, is no stranger to accommodating big crowds, with a rich history of staging some of the most spectacular public displays over the years in various guises.

This year's Festival of Flight, which will play special homage to the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, is being co-ordinated by outside company Synergy Events.

A spokesman told KoS: "We have been selling hundreds of tickets a day, and it always looked like we were heading for a sell-out.

"People love this show and are getting in touch all the time. They are being sold in advance simply to limit the number of people turning up.

"There is a strict limit of 18,000 and if they were sold on the door, it could lead to people eventually being turned away which would be really disappointing."

Among the displays will be the al-

ways popular Red Arrows team which will be one of a number of aerobatic display teams flying in specially for the event.

Also to be seen is an RAF Typhoon, Hurricanes, Spitfires, a monster Chinook helicopter, a Swordfish biplane, wing-walkers and the B17 Sally B bomber - the star of big hit Hollywood movie Memphis Belle and the last remaining airworthy plane of its type in Europe.

Firmly on the ground will be military vehicles, dancing, singing, and children's areas.

Simon Ames, spokesman for the airport, said: "The show is sold out this year.

"The show has got a great heritage with a history of success and the public have enjoyed it for many years.

"We are focusing on the community and hope local families will come and see the airport operating in a different way with lots of flying and things to do and see on the ground too.

"It will be a mixture of commemoration, with the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, and celebration."

The airport played a major role during the Battle of Britain, allowing our fighter pilots to get into the air as they waged a hugely dangerous war in the skies above Kent in a battle for aerial supremacy.

The RAF went head-to-head with the Luftwaffe over three months, starting in July 1940, as they fought to prevent Germany from gaining aerial superiority.

Biggin Hill - then an RAF base -

served as one of the principal fighter bases protecting London and south east from attack by enemy bombers.

It is estimated that over the course of the conflict, fighters based at Biggin Hill claimed 1,400 enemy aircraft. However, it did not come without a cost. Some 453 aircrew based at the airfield were killed.

The bravery of those who took part and those who perished during the conflict will be remembered during the Festival of Flight next Saturday.

Gates open at 9.30am and the displays get under way at 1.30pm.

The event is scheduled to end at 5.30pm.



DISPLAYS: A variety of planes will take to the skies next weekend

HOLLYWOOD TANKS SET FOR COMBINED OPS SHOW

THE tank used in Hollywood movie Saving Private Ryan, and acclaimed TV drama Band of Brothers, will be making a special trip to the county in August.

The Second World War Sherman tank will be attending both days of the Combined Ops Military Vehicle and Air Show on August 15 and 16 at Headcorn Aerodrome.

It most recently appeared with Brad Pitt in the movie Fury which saw it take a starring role in the film, which is set in Nazi Germany and focused on US tank crews.

Sherman tanks were the mainstay of the Allied tank forces during the conflict, with over 50,000 built during the war, the vast majority built in the United States of America.



Tickets for the event are on sale now - priced at £25 for a family of two adults and two children.

It runs from 10am to 6pm on the Saturday, and 10am to 5pm on the

Sunday.

Aimed at creating a family fun day, discounted tickets can be purchased in advanced at www.combinedops.co.uk.



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How Wimbledon
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Call for Tories to slash the burden of red tape

by Molly Kersey
molly.kersey@archant.co.uk

SMEs are demanding the new Conservative administration slash red tape and make good their promises contained in the recent Queen's Speech.

According to a study released on Friday by Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, 52 per cent of SMEs (small and medium enterprises) across the south east want red tape slashed, while 35 per cent want better incentives to invest, and another 36 per cent say the skills gap needs urgent attention through more vocational education such as apprenticeships.

Other key concerns were the perennial issues of tackling late payment and financial advice (28 per cent) and opening up barriers to overseas trade (22 per cent).

It comes after the Government vowed to save a collective £10bn for British businesses and crack down on late payment problems.

Ian Patterson of Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, said: "Small and medium sized businesses have clear views on what the new Government's priorities should be, to help with their growth ambitions.

"Businesses have welcomed the Government's recent commitment to cut red tape and they recognise it as a priority. However, they will want reassurance that their concerns

about skills, investment and export will also be addressed."

It broadly reflects a survey by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

Alison Parmar, development manager at the Kent FSB, said of red tape: "It's so time consuming and often complicated, small businesses really do find that it slows them down so much."

Some 51 per cent of FSB members wanted a simplified tax system. "We know the government has promised a review, and we want them to push ahead with a full reform of it," Ms Parmar said.

"Some of the things that the FSB have been asking for are already taking place and we want to make sure that continues."

Leisure complex to get £1.7m revamp

THE firm which runs Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre announced on Friday work was due to begin on a £1.7million transformation of the site next month.

Sport and leisure management charity Fusion Lifestyle, along with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, will see facilities at the St John's Road site upgraded with a new gym and indoor cycling area.



Brake Bros make top company list

FOOD distributor Brake Brothers has been named in the top 20 of the 14th Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100.

The list, published this weekend, ranks Britain's 100 private companies with the biggest sales.

Some 24 of the list are headquartered in the south east, excluding London, with Ashford first in 11th place with sales of just over £3bn.

Body shop gets paint spray demo

A SPECIALIST body shop in Rochester which specialises in classic cars, is staging an evening showcasing a new paint system with a product demonstration.

MECH-Spray, in Miles Place Delce Road, will be holding the event between 4pm and 9pm on Thursday, June 18.

It will feature the latest Maxmeyer paint system and a special demonstration of how it works.

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Week ending June 7, 2015 33



Market site invests £1.8m to broaden its retail offering away from town high street

THE doors of Gravesend Borough Market Hall have closed ahead of a £1.8m refurbishment.

It is hoped that the revamp, which has been funded by a Big Lottery Grant, will give business in the area a boost – connecting the High Street and Queen Street as well as providing businesses with an alternative to the busier New Road.

“What none of us want to see is our town centre concentrated to one road,” said Samir Jassal, Gravesend Borough Council’s cabinet member for business development.

“The whole idea is to spread the town centre around and encourage footfall and jobs.

“I would like to think that it offers something different in a different corner of the town.”

The money for the refurbishment was awarded to Gravesend Borough Council as part of the Coastal Communities Fund.

The fund provided money to 36 seaside towns in order to help them increase job opportunities and boost growth.

The refurbishment is set to benefit 40 local businesses and create an additional 35 jobs for people in the area.

Mr Jassal said that a consultation was still ongoing in order to determine exactly what will happen next.

“We are engaging with people who specialise in markets,” he said.

“Every so often markets need to reinvent themselves to keep up with what’s going on. You can see some great examples of markets working all over the country.

“If you look at the markets, there are often dif-

“**W**hat we see is our town centre concentrated to one road. The whole idea is to spread the town centre around and encourage footfall and jobs”

Samir Jassal, cabinet member for business development.

ferent kinds of customers to those who want to shop in your general high street branded shops.

“That’s why it’s so important that the consultation is done right, and time is taken to see what people want and what works.”

The proposed alterations include creating a new entrance canopy on Market Square and introducing new stall structures with roofs, roller shutters and partitions.

“It’s going to be a combination of permanent and pop-up stalls. It’s going to look nice,” added Mr Jassal.

As well as this refurbishment, the Queen Victoria statue is also set to be cleaned and repaired at a cost of £20,000.

Current market stall holders will be relocating to vacant units, including the unit in the St George’s Shopping Centre – near the play area, and a small number will cease trading.

Back at the barn for Holiday Extras team

by **Chris Britcher**

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

HOLIDAY Extras’ expansion has continued, after it moved its shortbreaks team into the newly renovated site the company was first created in.

The company, which specialises in selling add-ons for holiday makers, such as airport parking and hotel stays, started life in Apple Barn on the A20 at Smeeth before moving to purpose-built headquarters a little over a mile away at Newingreen.

The shortbreaks team, which specialises in trips and stays at the UK’s leisure parks and West End shows, will now move back into the converted barn, which has been completely renovated after a £1m overhaul.

Simon Hagger, CEO of Shortbreaks Holiday Extras, said: “It’s great to be back at Apple Barn – this was where I started my career at Holiday Extras 18 years ago and I’m delighted to have come full circle with our shortbreaks team. Since starting shortbreaks ten years ago we have created over 120 local jobs and our exciting growth plans meant that we had real confidence to expand our operations and take on the extra space at Apple Barn.

“I’d like to thank the team who have put in



HQ: Holiday Extras’ Newingreen base

so much work to make the new offices such a success. The architects WaM (Walker and Martin) had an ambitious concept to create an environment with a genuine ‘wow factor’ by blending key elements of the original barn with new modern features to fit the needs of high tech business. The aim was for the building itself to be an inspiration to everyone working here, encouraging creativity and collaboration. I really feel we have delivered on that vision – Apple Barn now adds to what makes Holiday Extras a unique and exciting place to work.”

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Cashing in on SW19's celebrated treat of strawberries and cream

by **Molly Kersey**

molly.kersey@archant.co.uk

WHEN it comes to developing a strong association with a global sporting brand, there can be fewer greater achievements than laying claim to providing the strawberries to Wimbledon.

The classic fruit is as synonymous with SW19 and the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, as betting is with the Grand National.

And for many years Hugh Lowe Farms in Mereworth, near Maidstone, have served up literally tonnes of strawberries – 30 tonnes will be delivered when the tournament starts on June 29 – to a company called FMC, a subsidiary of catering giants Compass, which has the contract to supply to the tennis extravaganza.

The benefits to the local economy as a result are considerable.

Explains Marion Regan, managing director of Hugh Lowe Farms: "It's entirely a seasonal business. The Kent soft fruit season starts in April



HIT: As Andy Murray seeks to win his second Wimbledon crown, 30 tonnes of Kent strawberries will be served.

and keeps going until the end of November. We gear up for the peak of the season, which is around Wimbledon time - even though they are a week later this year.

"Although we have about 35 full time employees we need up to 500

seasonal staff."

This year's crop is predicted to be one of the best for years due to weather conditions - even though most of the fruit is grown under protective tunnels.

Ms Regan adds: "We need to make

sure that we have fruit available, we don't want to go short.

"They have been pretty consistent in their specifications for many, many years. They want something that is a quintessentially British summer strawberry, like Sonata and Elsanta."

Architect sets sail on waterfront plan

PROGRESS on plans to regenerate Dover waterfront continued this week with the appointment of Leslie Jones Architecture to design and deliver the commercial strategy.

It was appointed by the Port of Dover and Bride Hall Real Estate Partners which are spearheading the scheme. It will see a mixed-use development to include residential, catering, retail and leisure facilities to revitalise the town and elevate the area's tourism offering.

Entrepreneur gets Branson boost

AN entrepreneur from Canterbury, who launched his business thanks to funding from Virgin StartUp, is celebrating after winning the opportunity to develop his business growth strategy with Sir Richard Branson this Thursday.

George Edwards, 19, will get one-to-one time on the inaugural Virgin Atlantic flight to Detroit.



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On a wing and a prayer: The fight of the bumblebee

Short-haired bumblebees went extinct in the UK in 2000. **Maria Chiorando** reports on their return...

THERE can be few more iconic images of British summer than that of the short-haired bumblebee hopping from plant to plant fulfilling one of the most essential - yet frequently overlooked - roles in the sophisticated ecological framework; pollination.

At least, so you would think.

But the truth is that this particular variety was last seen in the UK in 1988 and declared extinct on our shores in 2000.

Until, that is, a major reintroduction programme got under way in recent years right here in Kent.

And this week, that continued on the shingle banks of the sometimes desolate surroundings of Dungeness.

Monday saw the latest controlled released of another batch of the insects, specially imported from Sweden, and which experts hope will see the fledgling colony strengthen.

It is the result of the coming together of scientists and experts from National England, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the RSPB and Hymettus, a leading research and advice organisation specialising in the conservation of bees, wasps and ants across the UK.

Nikki Gammans is a project officer for the collaborative short-haired bumblebee partnership. She says: "Bees are a flagship species. Having them in an area helps support other species, including farmland birds, rodents and a diversity of insects.

"They are responsible for pollinating so many crops, and are a charismatic and beautiful species. Anyone whose studied them can see the queens have different personalities. Some are feistier and others can be more shy and retiring.

"On top of that, they are very valu-

able, and bring a lot to the economy through the work they do pollinating plants."

In fact, through the pollination of commercial crops, industrious insects are estimated to contribute over £400 million per annum to the economy.

The short-haired bumblebee, also known as *bombus subterraneus*, is one of 27 bumblebee species native to the UK.

According to a spokesman for Natural England, the Government's natural environment adviser: "Although the short-haired bumblebee was considered to be locally common in east Kent and Suffolk at the beginning of the 20th century, that declined rapidly after the 1960s.

"The bee was last recorded in Britain from Dungeness during an extensive survey of the invertebrates of the area in 1988, and was not found in either 1997 or 1998 despite targeted searches.

"There are no records from Scotland or Northern Ireland, and no confirmed post-1960 records from Wales. This bee is widespread in Europe but declining over much of its former range."

Increasing demands on food production, as well as the introduction of new technologies meant that traditional agricultural techniques were overtaken.

The new methods, which produced new food, also reduced the number of wildflowers in the countryside - bad news for bees who rely entirely upon flowers for food. Their populations started to decline, with two species dying out.

The short-haired bumblebee partnership was formed in 2009. Initial efforts to import the bees (see timeline) proved ineffective with bees found in New Zealand all dying before



ICONIC: Short-haired bee is making a return on the Kent coast

they had got through quarantine to re-enter the UK. Instead, bees in Sweden were sourced and the programme started enjoy some success with annual releases from 2012.

Explains Dr Gammans: "Working alongside me are 29 volunteers - they are all brilliant and have dedicated their own time to the project."

In order to reintroduce bees, they had to be brought over from Sweden. They were then quarantined before being released.

"There are bee disease specialists," explains Dr Gammans. "Samples are screened, and if they have diseases, they are not released - around 50 per cent of the queen bees are diseased.

"The plan is to have five years of releases in total. After releasing them, we observe the, to track how they are doing.

This is a case of walking to try and find them - we go to suitable foraging

areas, as the bees know the best sites to forage."

One of the project's objectives was to get the bee into people's consciousness.

Dr Gammans says: "The plight of the bee has really attracted attention - and it's fantastic talking to so many people who care so much about our threatened bumblebees. People have really started to get interested, which was an aim of ours."

There are ways how those who are interested can help local bees. "Several bee species are in real trouble and have been in decline for many years," says Dr Gammans. "But if we all make an effort to plant the right native nectar-rich plants in our gardens then we can make a big difference.

"Lavender is my favourite - it looks and smells beautiful and bumblebees just love it."

THE RSPB DUNGENESS PROJECT TIMELINE

2009:

The Short-haired bumblebee partnership is formed.

2009 AND 2010:

Attempts were made to captive rear and export queens back from New Zealand to the UK but with limited success. Results from genetic analysis showed high levels of inbreeding.

2011:

Sweden replaces New Zealand as a source for bees.

MAY 2011:

An initial visit to Sweden found suitable source locations. A sample of bees were collected and have been checked for diseases at Royal Holloway, University of London.

MAY 2012:

Short-haired bumblebees are released in Kent - nearly a quarter of a century after the bee was last seen in Britain.

JUNE 2013:

A further 50 short-haired bumblebee queens are released.

JULY 2013:

The first short-haired bumblebee workers were recorded within 5km of the release zone. This means the queen bees had successfully established nests within the area for the first time in 25 years.

MAY 2014:

Another 50 queen bees are released.

JULY 2014:

Three worker bees were recorded foraging within the Dungeness area.

JUNE

2015: 50 bees were released in Dungeness.

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VITICULTURE: Scientists will be studying the science and production of grapes

How the county's scientists are taking English wine to next level

East Malling Research is turning its attention to science of the grape, as [Maria Chiorando](#) reports...

Kent is already a world leader in soft fruit production – and now wine is firmly set in the county's sights.

Scientists at horticultural research centre East Malling Research (EMR) have set up a project, pairing academics and new wine production facilities in a drive to improve the UK's burgeoning market.

"The industry here is booming," says Ross Newman, head of communications, at EMR. "The climate in the UK, and especially here in the south east is similar to how the Champagne region was in France 20, 25 years ago.

"So there is every reason the wine sector can flourish further."

EMR has planted a research vineyard for both scientific and demonstration purposes, growing seven varieties of grape, including red and white. The vineyard will ensure that research is directly applicable to commercial vineyards and also provides an essential tool to help test new methods and novel ideas within the research into viticulture.

The country has 470 vineyards, and in Kent alone, there are more than 350 acres of land dedicated to cultivating grapes as well as a bustling local trade, that makes up a good chunk of the country's 150 wineries.

"The industry's retail value is over £80 million, with around 4.45 million bottles of wine being produced in 2013.

Mr Newman says: "There's something very significant happening,

and a lot of it is happening in Kent. Now we need science to move the industry further.

"Traditionally at EMR we have focussed on soft fruits, strawberries, raspberries are a big thing here.

"And we have been responsible advances in the ways fruit such as apples are grown around the world.

"The advances we have made have been phenomenal, so now we are looking at applying world class research to viticulture."

Viticulture is the science, production, and study of grapes. It deals with the series of events that occur in the vineyard.

"We have been looking at aspects of this for years," explains Mr Newman. "There are a lot of challenges that face growers, pests, diseases and also crop efficacy.

"Because of our location in north west Europe we have disease pressures due to the warm, wet climate."

Julian Barnes is the MD of Bidenden Vineyards in Ashford.

The company grows 11 different grape varieties on 23 acres of gentle south facing slopes.

It produces white, red, rosé and sparkling English wines, which are pressed, fermented and bottled on the estate. He says: "There has been a huge increase in the amount of interest in English wines over the last few years.

"This ties in with a general growing interest in local produce.

"We are always looking to innovate, so research is very important.

"To have scientists of EMR's calibre

working on it is very exciting."

In order to carry out the research, the centre has appointed a head of viticulture – Dr Julien Lecourt, who recently completed a PhD studying the rootstock effect on nitrogen use efficiency in grafted grapevines at the University of Bordeaux in France.

According to Mr Newman, Dr Lecourt is 'very much enthused by the opportunity to exploit the specific conditions we have here to produce something unique to British wines'.

Everywhere you grow crops has its own variables, in terms of climate and soil, and according to EMR it's important to work with the conditions you have in order to create the best product.

Mr Newman says: "All too often we try and grow something the way it's grown in other countries – we need to look at how can create our own product rather than imitating others."

And there is certainly plenty of scope to increase local grape yields.

Dr Lecourt says: "Currently, the UK imports around 240,000 tonnes of table grapes with a value exceeding £300 million per year. This is in stark contrast to the embryonic UK-grown table grape sector which represents less than 0.5 per cent of the market.

"If we succeed in finding the varieties and systems best suited to economically sustainable production in the UK, we could certainly look to valuable import substitution.

"However, this will need scientific studies to determine the cultivation systems that are most productive in the UK climate.



EXPERT: Dr Julien Lecourt

"Concerning wine grapes, there is huge potential for producing increased quantities of high quality wines in the UK. The industry here is becoming well-organised and, I believe, will have an increasing demand for research targeted at quality and productivity, but also to improve environmental sustainability and profitability.

"There is a huge opportunity to exploit the unique UK 'terroir', the combination of environmental and physical growing conditions, and establish bespoke UK vines for UK wines."

Mr Barnes adds: "We are in a situation at the moment, where the chemical list of sprays we can use to combat disease is being reduced.

"As we get chemicals banned, we are ending up having to treat different diseases.

"Some farmers – maybe the older ones – would say the sprays we are losing have a much broader level of use.

"We are trying to find things that are not chemicals – looking at using natural ingredients to combat these problems, so that we can make an organic product.

"One of the major things we struggle with in this country is mildew.

"If we can start to deal with these kind of issues, we are looking at much bigger plant yields, which could save money for us and then of course the consumer."

While it sounds very theoretical, Mr Newman is keen to point out the research will benefit production. "We put industry at the heart of our work," he says, "And we definitely believe the country can and will create world class wines. We have a unique climate here, and we need to capture that. We are committed to focusing on the science – and communicating that to help the industry."

Mr Barnes adds: "As we grow more of our own fruit we may move into a situation where we are growing table grapes, as well as the wine grapes we produce now.

"If you had asked me 10 years ago whether I would think we'd be producing red wine, I would have been sceptical. We are always looking to make advances, so this kind of research really benefits everyone in the agricultural community.

"We really need to look at spending more money on research and development across the board."



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SUCCESSFUL: Rae Morris released her debut album *Unguarded* in January to critical acclaim and it reached the top 10 in the UK album charts.

Talented singer will see sun go down at a Forest Live gig

Rae Morris spoke to **Molly Kersey** about her upcoming Tunbridge Wells show

It has taken Rae Morris a great deal of soul-searching to get to where she is today.

The singer-songwriter has previously recorded with artists including Bombay Bicycle Club and Clean Bandit.

Since then, her electro-ballads and stage presence have gained her a huge amount of popularity - with songs including *Love Again*, *Under The Shadows* and *Don't Go* earning her success.

Delving into the emotional aspects of growing up and personal relationships, her debut album *Unguarded* was released this year to a plethora of critical acclaim, reaching the top 10 in the UK album charts on its release.

Now, she will be joining Tom Odell when he performs at the Bedgebury Pinetum, near Tunbridge Wells, on June 19.

The performance is part of Forestry Commission's Forest Live, a tour of the nation's forests.

"I can't wait, I am really looking forward to it. I have never been to Tunbridge Wells before so it will be nice," she said.

"I played at City Sound and that was my first time in Kent, we played in Canterbury.

"I have only ever played outside when it's at a festival, so it will be interesting as a headline venue.

"It will still be light, so I guess we'll get to see the sun go down."

She has performed with Mr Odell, whose debut album *Long Way Down* shot straight to number one, before.

"I supported Tom on one of his 2013 tours, we actually got on really well," she said.

"We ended up playing one of my songs, *Grow*, and collaborating on

that. He's a really nice guy."

And she hasn't ruled out the two of them working together again in the future.

"The good thing about collaborating is it usually comes about really naturally, so we'll see."

Ms Morris will be performing tracks from her album *Unguarded*.

So what can audiences expect?

"It's my debut album that I released in January," she said.

"When I first started writing the songs I was 17. They were the first ever songs I wrote.

"I was just learning how to write and what I wanted to say through music.

"Really it's a journey. It's a coming of age story and people can almost hear the progression and hear the change in tone."

The singer knew that a musical future lay in store early on in life.

But she never dreamed how much her career would take off, thinking instead that she would pursue a future in music therapy.

"I started playing piano really, really young. I always knew it was going to be a part of my life.

"I didn't think that I could actually be the face of it as well."

And recording her album was something of a transition.

"Playing live was my thing, so I had to go from playing live all the time to recording those songs."

So where does she find inspiration for her music?

"There are lots of different layers to it. The people around me have been really inspiring," she said.

"A lot of the songs are inspired by personal relationships and human emotions."

To book call 03000 680400 or visit www.forestry.gov.uk/music.

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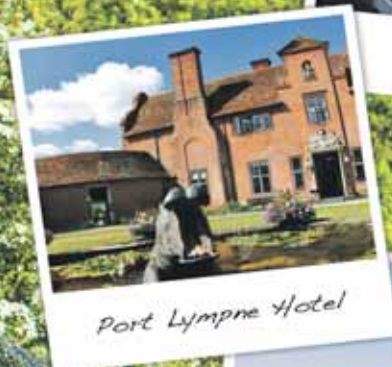
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Adventures of brave Stick Man branch out from page to stage

by Molly Kersey

molly.kersey@archant.co.uk

THE stage adaptation of Julia Donaldson's popular children's book *Stick Man* will be performed at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford.

The family-friendly show will be in town on July 20 and 21.

Adapted from the illustrated book, with pictures created by Axel Scheffler, it tells the story of *Stick Man*, who lives in a tree with his 'Stick Lady Love' and three children.

It charts his adventures as he makes his way into the outside world, which he quickly discovers is a dangerous place to be a stick.

A dog wants to play fetch with him, a swan builds a nest with him and he even ends up on a fire. Will he be able to make it back to the safety of his family tree?

Speaking about her inspiration for creating the book, writer Julia Donaldson explained: "The *Gruffalo's* Child has a little stick doll and then that set me thinking about sticks and how they can become so many different things."

"I remembered how when my



ADVENTURE: *Stick Man* finds danger in the world outside his tree. Picture by: Steve Ullathorne.

sons were little they would play with sticks and they would be everything.

"I thought about this for some time and how a stick can be mistaken by lots of different creatures for lots of different things."

"So it can become the mast of a sand castle, it can become a stick for a dog, it can become a bat for a bat and ball game."

The story of *Stick Man* evolved in

the imaginations of both Ms Donaldson and Mr Scheffler – the popular children's illustrator of the *Gruffalo* fame – and developed into a fully illustrated narrative.

And, luckily, the tale has a happy ending for the adventurous *Stick Man*, with Santa Claus playing a pivotal role in this.

"I knew from very early on that I wanted to get *Stick Man* back to his tree," said Ms Donaldson.

"I liked the idea of him being dropped into the tree and the obvious person to do that was Santa Claus."

"And it also fitted with the idea of the book travelling through the seasons."

For more information or to book tickets you can visit www.orchardtheatre.co.uk.

Alternatively you can call the ticket office on 01322 220000.

Pick 'n' mix performances

A VARIETY show featuring songs and sketches will be performed at the Gravesend Theatre Guild on June 7.

All proceeds will go to charity ellenor.

To book, call 07738416183.



From The Jam on stage

FROM The Jam will be taking to the stage at this year's Dartford Festival.

The group features former Jam bassist Bruce Foxton, vocalist and guitarist Russell Hastings and drummer Steve Barnard.

They will be perform on July 19. For details, visit www.dartford.gov.uk/festival.

Pasquale back to roots

COMEDIAN Joe Pasquale will return to his stand-up roots for the Joe Pasquale Summer Tour, which will be at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford on July 31.

To book, call 01322 220000.



East is East in Bromley

THE critically-acclaimed play *East is East* will be performed at The Churchill Theatre, Bromley, from July 6 to 11.

The play is written by Ayub Khan Din, and his semi-autobiographical account of life in the 1970s tells the story of George Khan and his family. Call 0844 8717620 to book.

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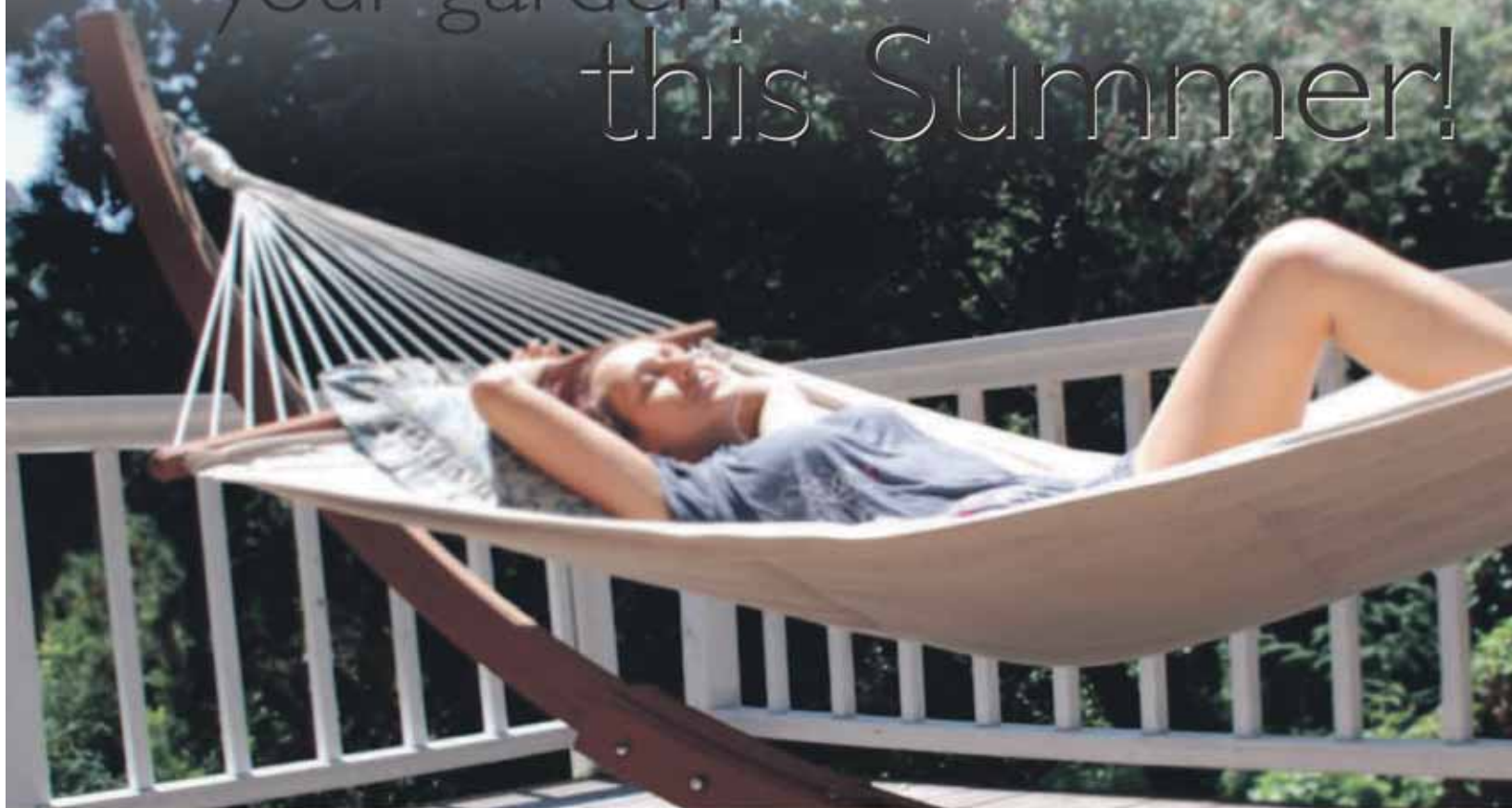
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Ramblin' Man festival set to rock the county

By Maria Chiorando

maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

THE Ramblin' Man Fair music festival takes place in Maidstone's Mote Park next month. And organisers have announced more about the acts that will perform.

The festival showcases classic rock, progressive rock, country and blues over the weekend of July 25 and 26.

Among the acts on offer are Gregg Allman, the Scorpions and Seasick Steve.

Gregg Allman is a widely celebrated American rock and blues singer-songwriter, keyboardist, guitarist, and founding member of The Allman Brothers Band, who enjoyed huge success in the early 1970s.

In spite of his brother Duane's death in 1971, Mr Allman let the power of his music live on via developing a solo career. As a career milestone and indication of his legacy, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995 and still tours worldwide to this day.



ANATHEMA: Are just one of the bands at The Ramblin' Man Fair

The Scorpions are a legendary rock band, hailing from Hannover, Germany. Since their inception in 1965, the band has given listeners a unique, yet diverse musical style, ranging from hard rock to heavy metal.

The Scorpions have been recognized as one of the world's best selling music artists of all time with reported sales of 75 million records worldwide.

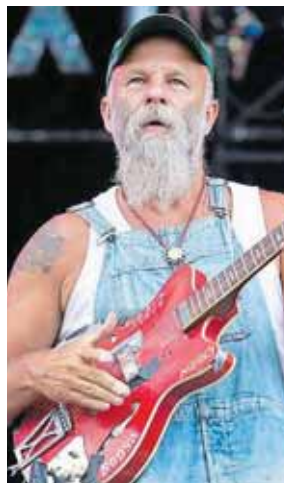
Aside from ranking number 46 on VH1's Greatest Artists of Hard Rock program, smash hit Rock You Like A Hurricane is also

number 18 on VH1's list of the 100 Greatest Hard Rock Songs.

Seasick Steve's performance on Jools Holland's 2006 New Year's Eve Hootenanny, was an object lesson in the power of raw emotion, roughly sculpted into words and music, and conveyed with the minimum of complexity.

And it was that performance that placed him on the path to becoming the powerful live force he and drummer Dan Magnusson have become today.

Tickets are available from www.eventbrite.co.uk, and start at £55.



SEASICK STEVE: The musician appears on the Sunday



BLUES: Gregg Allman is widely celebrated

Heavy metal band at Leas

HEAVY metal band Bullet For My Valentine will be performing at the Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone, on October 18.

Tickets for the show are available to buy now.

To book, call 0844 871 3015.



Hit musical Evita in town

THE hit musical Evita will be performed at the Hazlitt Theatre, Maidstone.

Created by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, it features hit songs including Don't Cry For Me Argentina and You Must Love Me.

It will run from June 10 to 13.

Visit www.parkwoodtheatres.co.uk to book.

Digance due in Margate

PERFORMER Richard Digance will be at the Theatre Royal Margate on October 23.

The singer and guitarist has previously supported Steve Martin and Robin Williams.

For tickets call 01843 292795.



Tea party turns into chaos

THE tale of a well-intentioned tea party which descends into chaos will be performed at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells.

When housewife Diana arranges a gathering, preparations spark tensions.

Absent Friends runs from July 2 to 4.

Call 01892 530613 to book.



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Let food be your medicine and heal from within

A new, more holistic way of eating is making waves on the health scene. **Kate Whiting** finds out more

LILY Simpson and Rob Hobson are the best advert for their new cookbook, *The Detox Kitchen Bible*, arriving for our interview fresh-faced and sparkly eyed, while I'm nursing a chocolate hangover from leftover Easter Eggs (yes, in May).

But they're not meeting me to preach about going wheat, dairy and sugar-free: they're hoping to share the message that cutting down on those foods just 80 per cent of the time will give you more energy - and help you to live healthily without the need for crash diets.

"Our detox is not as you'd imagine, it's not a strict regime, it's a lifestyle change," says Lily, who's multitasking as she speaks, breastfeeding her six-

month-old son Finley and sipping on a hot chocolate ("half milk, half water"), with her dog Rudy sitting obediently at her feet.

"We're saying, 'If you eat really well 80 per cent of the time, then 20 per cent of the time, you can go out and have some drinks, indulge and have whatever you want'. Once you understand that and listen to your body, you don't need to worry, because you know what to cook that makes you feel good."

"It's really important that people become connected again with what they're eating."

The book is split roughly in two parts, with delicious, healthy recipes from Simpson making up the first half, which all come with a list of the



HEALTHY: The couple are glowing with health

health conditions they can be useful for, and the second part is nutrition advice from Hobson, with suggested detox plans designed to help your heart, bones, digestive system, mind, weight and immunity, among other things.

Nutritionist Hobson says the best approach is to embrace healthy eating as a whole lifestyle, rather than a diet, and go slowly.

"The way that people end up not doing anything is they just try and do it all at once. Take small steps. Take one recipe a night and start with cooking something fresh," he says. "If you're eating lots of sugar, don't give it up straight away, just eat one biscuit instead of two."

"We're not telling anyone to do an-

thing we don't do. I like a glass of wine in the evenings, but I know that most of the time, my food is spot on. I exercise, I try and get as much sleep as I can, you've got to try and find a balance and it's different for everybody."

Simpson is all about the balance, too. "I eat butter on toast for breakfast, I have a really filling lunch and a healthy dinner and then I probably have a glass of wine and a chocolate, so it's kind of that balance," she explains.

"Some of the unhealthiest people I've seen are walking around 'health food' shops. They follow really strict diets, they've eradicated everything, they're living on supplements, they look so tired, they've just got it wrong."

Ramsey all grown up

CRITICALLY acclaimed stand-up comedian and regular on ITV2 comedy show *Celebrity Juice*, Chris Ramsey will be performing at the Folkestone Quarterhouse on December 3.

His new show, *Chris Ramsey: All Grown Up*, explores his experience of getting older, taking responsibility and the frightening realisations that come along with adult life.

For tickets call 01303 760750.

Food show is taking off

THE Quex Food, Drink and Craft Show, taking place on June 13 and 14, is now in its seventh year.

There will be more than 40 stalls of crafts, along with Kentish foods and drinks, including bread and cake from local bakers, soups, olives and savoury eats.

Entrance is £1 for adults but free for accompanied children under 12. For details visit www.midasleisure.co.uk.

Oklahoma due in town

PULITZER prize winning musical *Oklahoma!* will be at the Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, from June 16 to 20.

Set in the Oklahoma territory in the early 1900s, the musical tells the story of two sets of star-crossed lovers.

Their stories are told with the help of hit songs including *Oh What A Beautiful Mornin'* and the title song.

For tickets, call 01227 787787.

Adventure in Aladdin

PANTOMIME adventure *Aladdin* will be performed at the Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone, from December 22 to January 9.

The show will be directed by Bob Osborne and produced by Neil Hunnisett.

It will feature musical numbers, lavish costumes and a flying carpet, aiming to provide family entertainment.

Tickets are available to book now. To book, call 01303 228600.

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Last call for gardeners to enter the 2015 Kent Life Garden of the Year and Primary School competition

HOW is your garden looking this year? Pretty special? Then why not show it off to other readers and enter the Kent Life Garden of the Year or Primary School Garden of the Year competition. You'll be in with a chance of winning some fabulous prizes and full coverage in your favourite glossy lifestyle county magazine.

The closing date for entries is Friday, June 12, 2015

Eight finalists will then be selected and visited by the judging panel, headed up by award-winning garden designer and plantsman Roger Platts, after the closing date.

All finalists' gardens will be photographed by Kent Life between June 19 and July 2.

All finalists will also be invited to a celebratory high tea in a marquee at Hadlow College on September 17, 2015, where the winners and runners-up will be announced after a delicious afternoon tea and a chance to explore Broadview Gardens.

Prizes

Two first-prize winners, one per category, will each receive:

- An engraved bench from Coolings Garden Centre, Knockholt
- £250 of garden vouchers from Coolings Garden Centre, Knockholt
- Framed personalised certificate
- Pictorial feature in Kent Life

Six runners-up (four adults and two primary schools) will each receive:

- £100 of garden vouchers from Coolings Garden Centre, Knockholt
- Framed personalised certificate



VICTORY: Children at Whitstable and Seasalter Endowed Church of England School, the winners of primary school garden of the year 2014

Criteria

The judges will look at the overall design, planting and maintenance of the garden, and the strength of the owner or school gardening club's connection and involvement with the garden.

For children: are there any cross-curricular activities related to the garden, or any eco-friendly or sustainable plans you can tell the judges about?

Kent Life regrets that photos and sketches cannot be returned and that by submitting them you are agreeing to their use in Kent Life and its associated websites and publications.

Entries from previous years, apart from the winners, are warmly welcomed.

How to enter

You can enter online at www.kentgardenawards.co.uk.

Or send an email with your entry and digital images to sarah.sturt@kent-life.co.uk.

Or post a hard copy and photos to Kent Life, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1PP.

Don't forget to include:

- Your full name, address, telephone (landline and mobile) and email address

- The category you are entering
- Four to eight photos of the garden (they can have been taken last year)
- A plan of your garden (optional, but very useful)

■ A bit about yourself/yourself, your garden and your personal connection with it



ELEGANT: Prue Seddon's classic garden won amateur garden of the year in 2014

‘VE ALWAYS found that buying flowers is so much less rewarding than growing them myself. When I see a beautiful bouquet, I often consider whether I could replicate its contents in my own garden.

As the forthcoming British Flowers Week aims to encourage people to think about where their flowers come from – about seasonality, locally grown blooms – it may be time to have a go at growing your own cut flowers.

Think about growing some of our favourites and find out what’s on trend with the following top tips from artisan growers:

“Peonies are always popular and will be at their peak during British Flowers Week,” says Rachel Siegfried of Green And Gorgeous (www.greenandgorgeousflowers.co.uk). “We are finding that the single peonies are really trendy in lemons and corals. Single varieties such as ‘Coral Charm’ and ‘Claire de Lune’ are particularly beautiful.”

Top tips: Always plant peonies shallow, never deep, literally just below the surface. You have to wait for three years until you can start picking from them. Pick your peonies at the ‘marshmallow stage’ when the coloured buds are soft to the touch. That way your peonies will definitely open properly and have a good 10 days’ vase life.

“Sweet peas are one of the classic English cut flowers, but they are plants that you can’t leave in the garden and forget! They need a bit of work,” says Gill Hodgson of Fieldhouse Flowers



DIY: There is immense satisfaction to be found in growing your own plants

Blooming, beautiful and British

(www.fieldhouseflowers.co.uk), founder of Flowers From The Farm.

Top tips: Don’t plant them out too early, as they do get checked by frost. Successionally sow them every four weeks, because sweet peas are only at their best for picking for about four weeks and then the stems go short and get pollen beetle. Take time to dead-head them and tie them in, says Rachel

Siegfried, who will be opening her nursery for Pick-Your-Own Sweet Peas, tours and flower demonstrations during British Flowers Week.

“I support my sweet peas with rows of canes to clamber over,” adds Carole Potilla, of Tuckshop Flowers (www.tuckshop-flowers.com). “Don’t overcrowd your sweet peas, because if you do it gets too dry and they can get mildew.”

Alstroemeria may be deemed old-fashioned but brides love them, especially the peach and lemon shades, says Siegfried.

“Alstroemeria are very popular in shades of peaches, apricots, creams and pinks and they last for ages. They start flowering in June and then tend to still be flowering in October to November,” says Claire Brown, of Plant

Passion (www.plantpassion.co.uk)

Top tips: Plant them in a sheltered site, in part shade or full sun, any time between May and August in good soil with plenty of organic matter at the roots. Water them regularly and stake all the taller forms to stop them collapsing in the wind. Pick them regularly to get successional waves of flowers.

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Stop push to centralise A&Es

SEEING the £1,400 a day 'interim' CEO of East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust (EKHFT), Chris Bown on ITV Meridian news answering questions about the recent devastating proposal to centralise all A&E in east Kent to one hospital in Canterbury, he trotted out the same old phrases about people will need to be taken to where their treatment will be 'safe'.

What neither he, nor his predecessor have said, is that being treated locally - to us, that is at the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital (QEOM) in Margate, it would become unsafe when EKHFT themselves move departments and consultants out of the QEOM thereby 'centralising' emergency care.

It will be EKHFT themselves making it 'unsafe' to get emergency care anywhere other than where they centralise it.

When EKHFT adopted the RCS' (Royal College of Surgeons) new 'trauma pathway', commencing April 8, 2013, they were legally obliged to hold public consultations prior to doing so.

They did not do so by using a legal loophole, calling the adoption of the William Harvey Hospital (WHH), at Ashford - Thanet's nearest trauma unit - 'interim'.

One assumes the WHH is still 'interim' because there still has never been any public consultation.

What EKHFT choose to ignore completely is that the new trauma pathway specifies quite clearly that access to either a major trauma centre or a trauma unit must be "inside 45 minutes".

We all know it is impossible to get from anywhere in Thanet to the WHH in less than 45 minutes so, incidentally, does the ambulance service who calculate the journey 'on blue lights' from the QEOM to the WHH to be 50 minutes.

Don't let them get away with it.

Betty Renz,
Margate

Bible back in the gay debate...

ALL Phil Granger does is 'prove' the contradictory nature of the Bible, a book I regard as only garbled history, myth and legend albeit with a variable thread of morality the best of which may be the sermon on the mount.

However, the fact is that whilst writers of it, at the time, may have said not a letter should be changed; it has been found from rediscovered documents to have had just that happen.

For instance, one of the earliest scrolls, the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus, was found to have had 35,000 amendments to it; and since he mentions Moses, the original texts of the Israelites leaving Egypt says they did not cross the Red Sea, but a Reed Sea.

These latter are still known on the Nile Delta today; and the

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Blood scandal must see justice is served

I HAVE just finished reading the two articles in the Kent on Sunday (last two weeks) about the awful way people have been infected with the most horrible diseases by contaminated blood.

I was even more shocked when the articles are about people I know very well. I knew Steve [Dymond, featured in the article after developing hepatitis C] doesn't enjoy the best of health, but never realised just how serious his health problems are. When it finally sank in how much and for how long they have suffered I just burst into tears.

I have known Betty [his mother-in-law where he and his wife live] for over 10 years. As a mother myself, I find it very difficult to imagine having to live every day with the sadness that she was unable to protect her daughter and son-in-law from having their lives shattered.

I know how painful being a widow is, but cannot even begin to understand what Su [Steve's

wife] has gone through never knowing when her husband will be taken from her by this unforgiving disease.

My late husband and I were always pleased to pay our taxes knowing that in some way they would be used to help people in distress. I really do not understand why the government over the last 30 years has not done much more to compensate the victims properly. In my walk of life, if someone does something wrong, they have to take responsibility, own up and put right the wrong and so should the government.

I do so hope your campaign in Kent on Sunday will make sure that this appalling scandal is sorted out properly once and for all.

I do enjoy reading your paper with its mix of local news and human interest stories and it does you great credit you are prepared to take on this very serious issue.

Carol Birch
Broadstairs

whole original event has been dated to around 1620BC and the eruption of Thera which destroyed the Minoans, as well as likely coinciding with a locust year and an outbreak of plague in the Israeli area, who were also not slaves.

Later, during the mainly European 13th/14th century crackdown, the original term 'human breath' was changed to 'human spirit', apparently because it sounded better. Are all these re-writers are 'burning in hell', as implied by Mr Granger? I rather

think not.

Today however, it must also have been much to Mr Granger's; and indeed Mary McNulty who previously backed another's gay-cure nonsense; chagrin that the people of that most Catholic of countries Ireland voted overwhelmingly in a referendum; the first country to allow such; to accept gay marriage.

If they can move on from such rigid interpretations of the Bible then so I suggest can everyone else including Mr Granger et al.

Indeed, many Christians I know; be they straight or gay; just place their God at the beginning of the Universe and then work via the laws of physics and evolution, including the variability of sexuality.

Ray Duff,
Folkestone

Hunting ban must be kept

REGARDING your article on foxhunting [KoS, last week], it is obvious why the promised vote to repeal the 2004 Hunting Act was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech.

David Cameron must be aware that there are numerous petitions on line urging him not to have this free vote.

These are attracting thousands of signatures from those who are strongly opposed to the return of this barbaric sport.

Hunters claim the sport keeps the number of foxes down, but if a hunted fox goes to ground, terrier dogs are used to flush it out and so prolong the brutal chase.

It is just a cruel bloodsport.

The law has been passed, and instead of a repeal to appease a minority of bloodthirsty hunters, which includes our prime minister, the 2004 Hunting Act should be strengthened to prevent foxes being illegally hunted.

Legalising hunting would mean not only foxes, but hares, deer and majestic stags being chased to exhaustion and then ripped to pieces by hounds.

This barbaric sport has no place in the 21st century and must stay in the past as have cock-fighting and bear-baiting.

Imagine if the 1840 Anti-Slavery Act had been repealed and laws prohibiting young children working in the mines had been reversed.

There were those who wanted to retain these abominations.

Vivien Clifford,
Deal

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3) Be written in clear, concise English.

4) Not be overly sensational.

5) Have a sense of humour.

6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.

7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.

8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.

9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.

10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.



Down House

by **Virginija Buskeviciute Lukauskiene**, from **Dartford**

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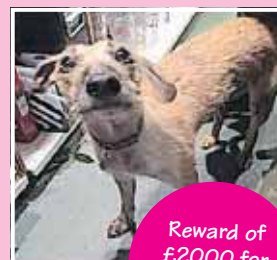
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MORE INFO:

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Vauxhall's bargain baby

FIRST DRIVE: It's classed as a city car, but the new baby Vauxhall is all the car that most people will need, writes **Steve Loader...**

At a stroke, Vauxhall has upset the city car segment pecking order by reviving the Viva name – missing from UK roads since 1979. This modern-day counterpart is an irresistible bargain from £7,995, driving as well as it looks, being cheap to insure and run – up to 65.7mpg combined with £20 a year or zero road tax to pay – generously equipped, and able to seat five, when many city car rivals are strictly four-seaters.

It also comes in versatile one-size-fits-all five-door format and just two trims, SE and SL, with standard kit including tyre pressure monitoring, lane departure warning, speed-sensitive power steering with easy park 'City Mode' function, electric front windows, electrically adjustable/heated door mirrors, cruise control with speed limiter, steering wheel mounted audio controls, tiltable steering column plus height adjustable driver's seat, and 60/40 split-folding rear seat back.

Adding air con costs £500 on the SE – electronic climate control being standard on the impressively posh SL model (£9,495). All models also come with Vauxhall's brilliant 1.0-litre engine, already seen in turbocharged format in the brand's other small cars, the latest Corsa and the Adam.



The inherent roughness of the three-cylinder has been engineered out to leave a light yet powerful unit. The Viva's 75bhp normally-aspirated variant plus five-speed manual 'box obviously lacks the punch of the turbo version, but Vauxhall argues that this delivers the price point required at this end of the market and the Viva seems none the worse for it.

For such a small car it also rides spectacularly well, while offering good cornering grip and minimal roll; far from being a second car, the Viva is all the car most households need.

It has just two real rivals and currently undercuts both on price: Hyundai's i10 and the VW Group's cloned VWUp/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo series.

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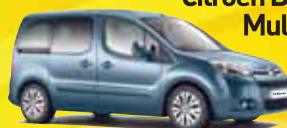
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Technical prowess of Skyactiv Mazda6

Mazda's advanced technologies make its sleek yet miserly flagship saloon and estate range attractive to both wallet and eye, writes **Steve Loader...**

YOU won't see Mazda gambling on untried and potentially expensive technologies, but we have seen the Japanese marque reworking and fine-tuning mature ones.

The result is a suite of clever stuff that the brand calls 'Skyactiv', largely concentrating on saving weight while maintaining rigidity and safety, driving down emissions and fuel consumption while, somehow, teasing yet more power from its engines.

Mazda has also developed a clever regenerative braking system that can save an engine recharging the battery, thereby cutting fuel consumption by up to 10 per cent.

Never mind that it's called i-Eloop, making it sound rather too much like a Geoffrey Boycott cricket commentary: "The bowler's given that a bit of i-Eloop an't batsman's given it some ay-oop over mid-weekie! That's roobish is that. My old mum could've bowled straighter."

Joking apart, all this Skyactiv tech is highlighted in the flagship Mazda6 saloon and estate model – the latter being tested here.

It's the brand's third generation Mazda6 – a model that revitalised



Mazda's fortunes in the Noughties – and it has just had a midlife facelift, with prices from £19,795.

That this makeover was minimal signals Mazda's confidence that it got things pretty much right first time around. On the other hand, the very few tweaks show that the brand was aware of what could be improved, so

work on NVH (noise, vibration and harshness) counters occasional intrusion of road and suspension noise that marred the near perfection of the pre-facelift car.

The interior was well-arranged before, but now also has a more premium look about the materials, to chime with Mazda's status as slightly



above the mainstream sector.

There has been little meddling with the elegant and aerodynamic lines of the car, while tax-beating benefits to company car user choosers remain among the best in this class.

The car looks elegant and classy in saloon or tourer (estate) format, the former having the four-door coupe

Mazda6 2.2D 150ps SE-L Nav Tourer

Price:	from £24,795
Driving appeal:	★★★★★
Image:	★★★★★
Space:	★★★★★
Value:	★★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★★
How green?:	★★★★★
Best rival:	VW Passat Estate

profile that is in vogue.

Admittedly, the latter's rakish lines cause it to lose out to some rivals when totting up load space; the new VW Passat, for instance, offers 650 litres of boot stowage or a crammable 1,780 litres with rear seats fully folded, against 508 and 1,648 respectively for the '6', but the Mazda earns bonus marks for style.

Weight-saving and efficiency gains from Skyactiv are also evident on the road, with pin sharp handling, minimal body roll and good refinement and response from all engine options – the slick gearshifting is typical Mazda.

The pick of the engines is the one driven here: the 150PS (148bhp) 2.2 turbodiesel, which is quiet, refined and claims 64.2mpg (combined cycle) in the estate while still able to reach 62mph in 9.2 seconds.

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Fuel consumption: figures shown are based on official EU test figures. These are to be used as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect all driving results. Terms and conditions apply. Vehicles shown for illustration purposes only. Finance subject to status. Over 18's only. Written quotations available on request. A guarantee may be required. *Part exchange vehicles must have a minimum of 6 months MOT and be free from mechanical faults.

DARTFORD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Heath Lane, Dartford, Kent DA1 2LY
Telephone : 01322 224309
Email: geraldine.harding@dstc.kent.sch.uk
www.dstc.kent.sch.uk
Principal: Seamus Murphy

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TEACHER (MPS) FULL OR PART TIME



Dartford Science & Technology College is seeking to appoint a hardworking and ambitious Health and Social Care Teacher with knowledge and experience or understanding of teaching the subject at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate exceptional teaching and organisational skills and be willing to become an integral part of a team who will motivate, inspire and support the students at DSTC. This position would be suitable for an NQT.

DSTC is a Co-operative Trust school and we are committed to supporting our workforce to be the best they can be. We can offer accelerated professional development with a personalised approach to developing all our staff through coaching, mentoring and both internal and external training. Our new staff will have unparalleled opportunities to learn and bring excellent practice to bear in raising achievement for the students of DSTC.

This post is subject to an Enhanced Disclosure by the Criminal Records Bureau and verification of the right to work in the UK. DSTC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all its staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Please visit the school website for an Application form and Job Description.

Closing date for receipt of applications: 15th June 2015

Interviews to be held week beginning: 15th June 2015

Kent on Sunday



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**Sedley's Church of England (VA)
Primary School**
Telephone: 01474 833221
Email: manager@sedleys.kent.sch.uk

Require as soon as possible

Mid-Day Supervisor

Sedley's is a small village school based in Southfleet, Kent

Vacancy is to support supervision of 101 children during lunchtime. 5 days per week. 12-1pm

Salary Kent Range Pay Band 2 - £14,099 pro rata

Previous experience not necessary as training will be given. First aid certification would be an advantage

Successful applicant will be subject to a DBS check

Temporary in the first instance

For further information please contact Mrs. Moore

Closing date 19th June, 2015



"We grow people"

Abbey Court School, a 'special' school and a 'special' place to work.

We are currently looking for a

Speech and Language Therapist

to join and enhance our high calibre team on a maternity cover contract commencing September 2015

Medway Scale, Grade B2 - £27,924 to £35,662 pro rata (term time only - part time or full time hours may be considered)

Abbey Court School is located on 2 sites: Rainham (Primary) and Strood (Secondary and Further Education), and caters for pupils aged 3-19 with severe learning difficulties. We are looking for an enthusiastic and effective Speech and Language Therapist, with a professional, flexible approach and a good sense of humour. In essence, somebody with an interest in an educational setting and who would like to work in a school committed to enabling pupils to reach their full potential.

Experience and dysphagia training desirable.

Candidates should hold a relevant Speech and Language Therapy degree/qualification. Benefits include: Local Authority pension scheme, induction training, performance management programme and Continuous Professional Development.

Visits to the school are welcomed.

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau Disclosure.

Due to the conditions and complex needs of the pupils at Abbey Court School, continuity and consistency of support is paramount, and therefore candidates for all positions will need to commit to the full working hours of the post.

For an application pack, or to make an appointment to visit, please telephone (stating the role for which you are applying):

Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent ME2 3SP (01634 338236)

Please note CV's will not be accepted

Closing date: 19th June 2015

Aiding Independence Ltd "Supporting People to Live Independently"

We are looking for FULL TIME SUPPORT WORKERS

To support adults with a learning disability with all aspects of their daily living and personal care.

You must be flexible, available to work any 5 days out of 7 including weekends, early mornings, evenings and sleep in duties on a rota basis.

Experience preferred, however, training will be provided.

Hourly pay £7.50 per hour.

For an application form please call 01227 741006 or email: aidingindependence11@btconnect.com

Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEOM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

The continuing growth of our business has resulted in a vacancy for the following staff:

Staff Nurse (Outpatients/Pre-Assessment) – Margate

Part time Hours: 30 per week Closing date: 19/06/2015

Salary: £19,000-20,000

Qualifications and Experience

- Registered Nurse 1st level or Dual Trained Registered Nurse
- Evidence of continual professional development
- Experience in a surgical/medical environment with a knowledge and understanding of surgical/medical procedures

Interviews for this role will be held on July 1st

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Carolyn Flegg, Outpatients Manager on 07925 978812

Senior Staff Nurse – Margate

Full time Hours: 37.5 per week Closing date: 19/06/2015

Salary: £26-28,000 per annum dependant on experience

Qualifications

- Registered Nurse 1st Level
- Minimum 2 years' experience, preferably in a surgical environment with a broad knowledge and understanding of multi specialist surgical procedures
- Evidence of continual professional development
- Teaching and Assessing Course or equivalent

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Mary Guarneri, Ward Manager, 07786 173797

For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Justine Whittle, HR Assistant
Telephone: 01304 245943

E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

Spencer Private Hospitals is an equal opportunity employer. These positions is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.



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Chaucer College Canterbury HOMESTAY FAMILIES WANTED EXCELLENT RATES OF PAY

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This Japanese College on University Road, Canterbury is looking for host families, 1 or 2 students for regular two week periods

Must be located either in Canterbury or surrounding areas.

Interested families should contact the college for an informal discussion on 01227 787800, or email

d.conroy@chaucercollege.co.uk

or alternatively visit our website www.chaucercollege.co.uk/recruitment.html

Chef

38 hours per week

£8.50/hour plus enhanced rates for weekend working. Alternating shift system covering early and late shifts.

Duties include, responsible for preparation and service of meals in accordance with weekly menu cycles, checking and preparation of equipment, maintaining a food safe environment with high standards of health & safety and hygiene at all times, ensuring compliance with current legislation. The ability to work as part of a team, flexibility and reliability are essential.

This position is subject to satisfactory references and enhanced DBS check.

To apply, download an application form from <http://www.chaucercollege.co.uk/recruitment.html>

Closing Date – 15th June 2015

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

LICENSING ACT 2003:

Application for Premises Licence

Gary HARRIS and Lisa MILLER of Mulberry's, 2 Station Road, Birchington, Kent CT7 9DQ have applied to Thanet District Council, P.O. Box 9, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent for the Grant of a Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003.

A copy of the application may be inspected during normal office hours at the Thanet District Council offices, address above.

The licensable activities will be Supply of Alcohol from 10:00 to 23:00 hrs every day; Late Night Refreshment from 23:00 to 23:30hrs every day; Supply of Alcohol, Live and Recorded Music from 23:00 to 24:00hrs and Late Night Refreshment from 23:30 to 00:30 hrs on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of Easter Bank Holiday, the two May Bank holidays, August Bank Holiday, Christmas Eve, Boxing Day and the first Saturday in June. All Licensable activities to continue on New Year's Eve from the end of Permitted Hours to the beginning of Permitted hours on New Year's Day.

Any representations in respect of the application should be made in writing to the Licensing Department, Thanet District Council, P.O. Box 9 Cecil Street, Margate, Kent by 25th June 2015.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence is £5000.

LICENSING ACT 2003:

Application for Premises Licence

Food Thirst Ltd of Woody's, 16 The Parade, Margate, Kent CT9 1EY has applied to Thanet District Council, P.O. Box 9, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent for the Grant of a Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003.

A copy of the application may be inspected during normal office hours at the Thanet District Council offices, address above.

The licensable activities will be: Supply of Alcohol, Live and Recorded Music 10:00 to 01:00hrs every day; Late Night Refreshment 23:00 to 01:30 hrs every day. All Licensable activities to continue on New Year's Eve from the end of Permitted Hours to the beginning of Permitted hours on New Year's Day.

Any representations in respect of the application should be made in writing to the Licensing Department, Thanet District Council, P.O. Box 9 Cecil Street, Margate, Kent by 26th June 2015.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence is £5000.

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LICENSING ACT 2003 PRESCRIBED PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT
MRS JURATE IESALNIECE
Has applied to Dartford Borough Council for a new time limited Premises Licence pertaining to
8 COPPERFIELDS SHOPPING CENTRE, SPITAL STREET, DARTFORD, DA1 2DE

FULL DETAILS OF LICENCE:

Sale of Alcohol for consumption off the Premises:

Monday to Sunday 10:00 to 20:00

Any representations from Interested Parties should be made in WRITING to: The Licensing Section, Dartford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR, no later than **Monday 8th June 2015**

Dated: Tuesday 12th May 2015

It is an offence knowingly to make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine of which a person is liable on summary conviction is level 5 on the standard scale (£5,000).

The Application and Public Register can be viewed in full at The Licensing Section, Dartford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR, Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

PUBLIC NOTICE

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL LICENSING OF SEX ESTABLISHMENTS.

The Bing, 11, Dover Street, Canterbury CT1 3HD.

We, HPLARLEON LTD of 84, High Street, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 1JJ, hereby give notice that we have applied to Canterbury City Council under the provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 for a licence to use the premises referred to above as a sexual entertainment venue.

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at: www.canterbury.gov.uk/licensing or at Council Offices, Military Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1YW tel. 01227 862000 by appointment with the Business Support Team, between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday.

Any person wishing to submit representations to our application must give notice in writing to the address shown above: giving in general terms the grounds of objection by 02/07/2015

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Home-grown star looks to sparkle

Kent's Bell-Drummond says he wants to 'build on good start'

Cricket

By Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

WHEN Kent County Cricket Club take to the crease in their game against Derbyshire which starts today (June 7), they will be hoping that rising star Daniel Bell-Drummond can muster up a performance akin to his back-to-back centuries against Leicestershire and Glamorgan.

The team are sorely in need of a convincing win following a disappointing start to their LV= County Championship Division Two campaign, which has seen them win just one of their first six games.

That's left the team floating at the bottom of the league table, only just staying above Essex, who still have a game in hand.

Nurturing home grown talent like Bell-Drummond, has been CEO Jamie Clifford's call for some time, and now, it seems, the young batsman is coming good on Clifford's hopes.

It isn't easy for the 21-year-old right hander though, with a different approach a necessity in each of the games.

He said: "We started off this season at Chelmsford on a green seamer, which was not ideal, so I just tried to get stuck in.

"Then, up at Old Trafford, there was a lot more pace and bounce, so there's different things to assess every time you go out.

"The main thing is to find a way to see off the new ball and get through to the next interval with your wicket intact. If you're still at the crease there's always the chance to make inroads later in the day when the ball softens or the bowlers tire."



OPENER: Daniel Bell-Drummond has slotted nicely into the opening duo

Pictures: ADY KERRY

Finding a way through is tougher when making up one of the opening duo according to Bell-Drummond.

He said: "You never really know if there's a delivery with your name on it. So, although you want to put the bad balls away, the feeling at the back of your mind is that you want to 'be there' at lunch if you've started your innings that morning.

"You'd much rather be out in the middle than back in the pavilion hav-

ing played a rash shot.

"Facing the new ball in red-ball cricket can be tough sometimes.

"I've kept working on my game, and I've been working hard to understand it. I've not really changed anything specifically, it's just how the process develops over time. There have been good early signs for me this season. But the key now is to build on my good start and continue my improvement."

Brands Hatch plays host to American muscle

AMERICAN muscle takes centre stage at Brands Hatch today, as the American SpeedFest III takes over the Sevenoaks circuit.

World famous racing series NASCAR will take to the track, with the Whelen Euro Series - the continent's only officially sanctioned series - blasting around the track.

Historic F5000 single seat racers will also be burning rubber alongside a variety of V8s.

Children are likely to love the action too, with a duo of official vehicles - Lightning McQueen and Tow Mater - from Disney Pixar's Cars film series exhibiting at the event. The Transformers movie also gets in on the action, with an official Hasbro Optimus Prime Peterbilt truck from the film set to exhibit alongside a Back to the Future DeLorean, which



NASCAR: High speed thrills from the States are set to appear

will star in a special on-track show.

David Willey, Brands Hatch events manager, said: "We've pulled out all

of the stops this year to make sure this is the biggest celebration of American motoring anywhere on this side of the Atlantic.

"We're going to be welcoming record-breaking numbers of American cars into the venue, and whether you're a hardcore V8 engine fan, or you're bringing the little ones to meet Lightning McQueen and Mater, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

"Our on-track programme is better than ever too, with our most American ever racing line-up, and a stunning selection of shows and demos."

Alongside the day of racing, the circuit will also showcase special demonstration runs with genuine cars from the world-famous NASCAR Sprint Cup taking part.

Sport Shorts » Email sports@kosmedia.co.uk or call Jamie Weir on 01233 653481

Fleet say goodbye to three while adding one

EBBSFLEET have announced that three more of their players will be leaving the club when their contracts expire.

Brendan Kiernan, Dean Pooley and Jordan Sanderson will all leave the Fleet. As the trio disappear, Ebbsfleet are also adding to their squad with new signing Robbie Willmott.

Willmott inked the deal with Daryl McMahon earlier in the week, after the speedy winger impressed during his time at Newport County.

The 25-year-old was released by the club after first signing for Newport in 2013.

The new addition will help Macca balance the squad, with the most recent departures including a midfielder, Sanderson, and a winger, Kiernan - Willmott can take on either position.

While Pooley departs the squad, he will be staying on at the team behind the scenes at Stonebridge Road. He'll be taking on the role of assistant to the general manager.



CHANGES: Fleet say bye to another three from the squad



BLUES: Losing key midfielder Charlie Allen

Allen leaves Margate FC despite promotion

MARGATE FC midfielder Charlie Allen has agreed he will leave the Blues after his contract expired at the end of the 2014-2015 season.

It comes as a blow to the team, after 22 year old Allen - who scored 13 times over the season - played a key role in helping secure promotion to the Vanarama National League South for the club.

The monster commute for home games were one of the reasons that Oxford-based Allen gave for calling time on his tenure at Margate.

He said: "After speaking to the

manager about the travelling and my own personal venture we both mutually agreed that it was best they we go our separate ways.

"I will always have a soft spot for the club. The club is destined for great things and I hope our paths cross again soon."

Manager Terry Brown paid tribute to the player saying that he had a 'magnificent season' and made a 'huge contribution' to the club making the play-offs, despite an injury which had kept him on the bench for two months.

Gills book Portsmouth tune up

THE Gills are set to have a busy pre-season, lining up another friendly ahead of the start of the 2015-2016 Sky Bet League One season.

Justin Edinburgh's team will host League Two Portsmouth at their Priestfield Stadium on August 1. That'll make it two home games for Gillingham in just four days, with

Brighton visiting on July 29.

Portsmouth won't be a walkover either, with the team likely to be pushing for promotion next season.

The Gills now have a total of seven confirmed pre-season friendly matches. The first of these takes place on July 7, with the Gills travelling to Folkestone at the Fullicks Stadium.

Keep up-to-date with all Kent's sports news via social media on:
[Twitter @KentSport](https://twitter.com/KentSport) [Facebook www.facebook.com/kentsport.3](https://www.facebook.com/kentsport.3)



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Hatchback
Cappuccino
5,684 miles
£7,290

14/64 Spaceback Elegance



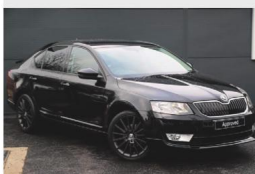
1.6 TDI 90PS
5dr Hatchback
Rio Red
6,123 miles
£12,990

13/13 Spaceback Elegance



1.6 TDI 90PS
5dr Hatchback
Black Magic
3,742 miles
£13,295

15/64 Octavia Black Edition



1.6 TDI 105PS
5dr Hatchback,
Moon White,
4,761 miles
£16,490

15/64 Octavia Black Edition



1.6 TDI 105PS
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Moon White,
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13/13 SE 1.0 MPI 60PS 5dr G-Tech Hatchback 15,636 miles Tornado Red	£6,995
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13/13 SE 1.0 MPI ASG 5dr Hatchback 15,854 miles Sunflower Yellow	£7,295
14/14 Sport 1.0 MPI 60PS 3dr Hatchback 10,000 miles Deep Black	£7,690

ŠKODA Fabia

12/12 SE 1.2 12V 70PS 5dr Hatchback 19,272 miles Brilliant Silver	£6,690
12/62 SE 1.2 TSI 86PS 5dr Hatchback 14,290 miles Corrida Red	£8,500
15/15 SE 1.2 TSI 86PS 5dr Hatchback Moon White	£11,990
15/15 SE 1.2 TSI DSG 5dr Hatchback 20,856 miles Anthracite Grey	£7,800
15/64 SE 1.4 TDI 90PS 5dr Hatchback Corrida Red	£13,790
11/11 SE Plus 1.2 12V 70PS 5dr Hatchback 18,626 miles Brilliant Silver	£6,800
11/61 SE Plus 1.2 12V 70PS 5dr Hatchback 5,684 miles Cappuccino	£7,290
15/64 Elegance 1.2 TSI 105PS 5dr Hatchback 1,852 miles Pacific Blue	£10,990
15/64 Elegance 1.2 TSI 105PS 5dr Hatchback 1,377 miles Black Magic	£11,295
14/64 Elegance 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Hatchback Moon White	£12,953
14/64 Monte Carlo 1.2 TSI 86PS 5dr Hatchback 15,497 miles Corrida Red	£8,495
12/12 SE Plus 1.2 12V 70PS 5dr Estate 37,161 miles Aqua Blue	£6,500
14/64 SE 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Estate Metal Grey	£11,982
13/63 Monte Carlo Tech 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Estate 10,399 miles Corrida Red	£10,495

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12/12 SE 1.2 TSI 86PS 5dr MPV 22,491 miles Miami Blue	£7,500
14/64 Scout 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr MPV Moon White	£12,990

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14/64 Spaceback SE 1.2 TSI 105PS 5dr 2,791 miles Moon White	£13,990
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14/64 Spaceback Elegance 1.6 TDI 90PS 5dr 3,742 miles Black Magic	£13,295
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13/13 SE 1.2 TSI 5dr Hatchback Black Magic	
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13/13 Elegance 1.6 TDI 90PS 5dr Hatchback 6,123 miles Rio Red	£12,990
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ŠKODA Octavia

14/14 S 1.2 TSI 105PS 5dr Hatchback 14,564 miles Denim Blue	£11,990
14/14 SE 1.4 TSI DSG 5dr Hatchback 13,426 miles Brilliant Silver	£15,490
13/63 SE 2.0 TDI DSG 5dr Hatchback Steel Grey	£16,000
14/14 SE 2.0 TDI DSG 5dr Hatchback 4,533 miles Steel Grey	£16,490
14/64 SE 2.0 TDI DSG 5dr Hatchback Race Blue	£16,990
10/10 Elegance 1.8 TSI 160PS 5dr Hatchback 22,517 miles Anthracite Grey	£8,500
10/10 Elegance 1.6 TDI DSG 5dr Hatchback 49,278 miles Satin Grey	£8,990
12/62 vRS 2.0 TDI 170PS 5dr Hatchback 14,943 miles Race Blue	£14,490
14/64 Black Edition 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Hatchback 4,761 miles Black Magic	£16,490
15/64 Black Edition 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Hatchback Moon White	£17,686
14/14 SE 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Estate 12,993 miles Race Blue	£15,500
15/15 L&K 2.0 TDI DSG 5dr Estate Topaz Brown	£27,500

ŠKODA Superb

13/13 SE Plus 1.6 TDI 105PS 5dr Hatchback 24,312 miles Steel Grey	£12,795
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14/63 SE 2.0 TDI 110PS 5dr Hatchback 5,161 miles Cappuccino	£15,690
11/11 SE 2.0 TDI 110PS 5dr 4x4 Hatchback 35,648 miles Tangerine Orange	£12,995
10/10 SE 2.0 TDI 140PS 5dr 4x4 Hatchback 75,766 miles Muscovado	£10,490
11/61 SE 2.0 TDI 140PS 5dr 4x4 Hatchback 30,600 miles Corrida Red	£14,990
12/12 Elegance 2.0 TDI 110PS 5dr Hatchback 28,409 miles Candy White	£14,000
12/62 Elegance 2.0 TDI DSG 5dr 4x4 Hatchback 18,881 miles Candy White	£17,290
12/12 URBAN 2.0 TDI 110PS 5dr Hatchback 36,133 miles Candy White	£12,795
15/15 Black Edition 2.0 TDI DSG 5dr 4x4 Hatchback Moon White	£23,090

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